Marc Silvestri, John Ostrander, Neil Gaiman

ARENA

MAGAZINE

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MARC DISCUSSES

RIPCLAW, DEATHMATE & STRYKEFORCE

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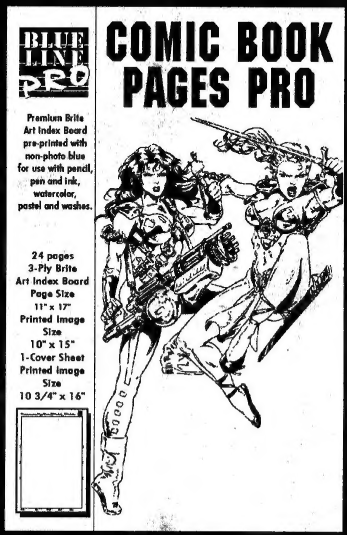
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SKY COMICS

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Editorial

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JULY 12, 1993
CONTACT: Scott Pierce
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Arena Magazine *Interview Switch*

Originally, *Arena Magazine* #12 was scheduled to contain a Rob Liefeld interview as its main feature but, due to unprecedented delays, this is not the case. Editor Joe Martin commented, "We have been attempting to contact Rob for some time. He is understandably busy but we couldn't afford to hold the book up any longer."

Not one to be stymied so easily, Martin promptly called Homage Studios and contacted Cynthia Sullivan who, in turn, hallooed upstairs to Marc Silvestri! That's correct. *Arena Magazine* #12 WILL NOT contain a Rob Liefeld interview but WILL present to you a candid conversation with the man who "loves to gab," as he told us, the unfathomable Marc Silvestri! Marc talks about his work on *Deathmate Black*, fills us in on upcoming projects such as *Codename: Strykeforce* and the *Ripclaw* miniseries, speaks up on *Cyberforce*, discloses his views on the Image restructuring and much, much more! All this and you still get the *Trencher* trading card by Keith Giffen.

Arena #12 will unfortunately ship about two weeks late, but it'll be worth it. Trust us.

– From a press release sent to distributors on 7/13/93.

Thrown To The Lions!

CORRESPONDENCE & ADVICE

Dear "Thrown to the Lions",
'Spit out the Competition'

This is the second time I have bought your magazine -- "Great Noise", 3 thumbs up! I bought two -- yes! -- magazines and this is not a burger commercial on TV! I enjoy the cards with your super magazine -- and don't call them trading cards -- and I keep them. One is for my boy and one is for me.

Your magazine Roars! with the voice of interviewers and conversations with the creators and life-givers of superheroes. You have the best coverage, too. What is happening? Not what you might think!

In your tenth issue the cover was excellent and interviews were very, very informative.

I do buy one other magazine that starts with a "W", but you won me for two each month! How about that?

I went into some comic stores and asked about Sky Comics. I got the big "Duh," and then you slam out your magazine with one big juicy article about Sky Comics. Presto! Change-O!

I have five ideas that you might bounce off yourselves:

1. Keep the cards! That is, in some form like buttons, sky caps, etc.

2. Insert a small poster (b/w or color) to match up in some way with the cover.

3. How about a drawing, photo, or poster of or done by the creators you interview?

4. Review a superhero, from his past to his present with a short form introduction.

5. Keep on Roaring!

Lunch!
Carl "Sandman" Henthorn
Boy Pries, FL

Many thanks for the kind words, Carl. People like you are the reason we keep doing this. Thanks for the ideas, also. Two of them are already in the works. Now, if we can just get you to quit buying the big W, everything will be cool.

Arena,

I've just come in on issue #9 and found it rather interesting, so I asked to have your magazine on my order list.

Comments: your magazine is quite good by what I have seen so far and read. You bring back memories of one of the finest comic related magazines -- *Amazing Heroes* -- which I saw as the best in the field, since comics are meant to be "read" and have fun with. Same with publications like A.H. and now like yours -- to have fun and be informative about what is happening in this medium.

What I enjoyed was mainly the interviews, although the Dave Dorman/Steve Bissette was a little too long. You even have a comics review -- oh -- how I waited for this, not a bad review of the 3 issues. Could it be a little longer (more issues of variety from different publishers)?

I enjoyed tremendously the article "If I were editor... ". Jerry, you hit the nail(s) right on the head(s), I couldn't agree more with you. I wrote several letters (critical, I know) which told Marvel about the directions, the art, and the storylines; which were downright awful. No, I know they would not print it or listen but a voice had to tell them.

But, you can speak in these publications and let comicdom know of the good, the bad, and the awful.

My vote on the polybag issue, is that as long as you don't raise the price to justify the goodies -- big deal.

Anyway, Arena, "you do good", as a famous movie character once said.

A fan and more importantly a supporter,
Mr. Leslie Matyas
Winnipeg, MB Canada

*First, let me welcome you on board Leslie. It's always nice to see new faces. Thanks for the **Amazing Heroes** comment! We try our best. Hey, the interview may have been a bit long but you can't criticize us for content! Oh, and Jerry thanks you.*

Dear Joe & Co.:

Hello again. I thought I'd drop in and chat for a bit. I just finished reading issue #9 and had a couple of comments I'd like to make (and yes, I do remember my promise not to be so much of an obnoxious peckerhead). First of all, I wanted to say that the mag is looking much better. You seem to be addressing my previous comments (as well a those of other readers, I might add). I also wanted to recommend a great style manual I just discovered. It's called The Mac Is Not a Typewriter, by Robin Williams (no, not that one).

As someone who has been working in desktop publishing for nearly 10 years I found it invaluable, as it pointed out a number of mistakes that I had been doing myself. (Here I am assuming that you are A) desktopping, and B) doing it on a Mac, so forgive me if I've erred on either point). Among the things that Williams points out are the differences between hyphens, en-dashes, and em-dashes; smart quotes vs. dumb quotes; why you no longer need two spaces after a period (as you do with a typewriter); why italics look better than underlin-

ing; plus loads of other great stuff.

It's only about 10 bucks, and, as I said, it very graphically points out how much greater flexibility a Mac has over mere typewriter. Also, it opened my eyes to how inexperienced it makes a person look when they continue to adhere to typewriter rules while utilizing a Mac for design and layout, (here I include myself). Check it out for yourselves, and see what I mean.

The final thing I wanted to say was thanks for not running my address or giving it out to others who wrote to you wanting to "set me straight" as it were. I've had letters with my address printed elsewhere and have received more than my share of missives from the lunatic fringe. Let me tell you there are few things in life ruder than honestly expressing your opinion, and then receiving obnoxious mail from total strangers who expresses-in no uncertain terms-why you have no right to hold your opinion, especially as it disagrees with his.

Which brings me to my main point, something which those who think I should "chill out" should consider. I've been working in corporate communications for about 10 years as a writer, editor, and desktop publisher (nothing they could have known, but shouldn't really matter). Which means that for nearly the past decade it has been my unenviable job to eliminate errors in the written and published works of others. It is for this reason that inconsistencies in style send me 'round the twist. (Ever view the sloppy work of someone who does the same job as you, especially when you are the customer on the receiving end of that work? Makes you nuts, doesn't it? It effects me the same way).

Well, now that that's off my chest, I certainly hope we can move on to the next order of business, and enjoy the fine publication that *Arena* is shaping up to become. Later dudes!

Scott Kincaid
Norwalk, CT

As always, thanks, Scott, for your candid comments. By the way, we don't use a Mac, we use a PC.

Hey Joe!

Nice editorial. You kind of hit everything on the head. What I'm learning about the comics industry is that everyone comes from the same rootstock -- we're all fans. We in the comics press have it better: Not only are we fans but we get to go behind the scenes and get the information straight from the horse's mouth. Man, what a trip.

Friendly rivals -- most definitely. Each one of us wants what's best for our magazine, but we also want to provide the best view of the industry for the comics public. And sometimes one publication may not be enough. With the industry growing at an amazing rate, it may just need all these (our) publications to cover it.

The group -- gang -- that teamed together that weekend was a group to be reckoned with. We proved to everyone there that we knew our stuff and could do the job.

And to all my peers (pals) that I met: Thanks for a most enjoyable weekend, good luck and until we remember all the words to the Josie and the Pussycats theme song, be well.

By the way, I wasn't a class clown. Best sense of humor, yeah. Class clown, no. But they're really close.

Maureen McTigue
Managing Editor
Comics Scene

You know it's nice to see that some people in this business are still willing to work with others in the field and not think that they are God's gift to comics. Friendly rivals? Yes, and also just plain old friends. Thanks, Maureen.

Dear Mr. Roadkill:

OK. I read your article in issue #8 about *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and felt I had to respond to your article. Top 'O' My Head must refer to the point there. First of all you completely missed the concept of *ST: DSN*. This particular space station happened to be manned by the Kardasians until the Bajorans and the Federation sort of joined forces and kicked them out. You must be getting it confused with Jason of Star Command or something. So, anyway, since they don't really know how to run the station, it lends itself to all sorts of interesting stories about getting the station back in working order, fixing equipment, and other things. Who knows, they probably will find some kind of special weapon left by the Kardasians and then the Romulans will be interested.

I think the plots are thought provoking and that is what makes *Star Trek* great, in any incarnation. they can explore the limits of humanity without necessarily going anywhere, so by setting the show on a space station one distracting element is eliminated. I think Einstein once said, "Space, being limitless, can only be explored by our imaginations, and our imaginations, being limitless, can only be explored by more imaginations," or words to that effect. Ever since I was little, I remember wanting to explore space, and since there was no Space Camp when I was a kid, I never got to go. *Star Trek* teaches us that space is not a place of endless time, but it is also a place of

finite possibilities, that we, too, can explore in our imaginations. *DSN* has acting that is just as good as Patrick Stewart's. Just watch it with an unbiased thinking sometime and you will see. For example, when the alien gamers came onto the station and kidnapped the main guys on the crew, it was a real intense situation. It would be easy for actors to act scared, but instead, Nana Visitor and the rest (She's really cute, too!) had to remain calm and uninterested, or it might have given away their fears. Then the gamers would have known. Also in the presence of the wormhole they show amazing control. Right outside their window is a force greater than any in the universe, but they have to remain cold and dispassionate about it in order to survive. It's like the ancient Chinese proverb, "One knows not what lies beyond one's window, so one shall lead the cat to drink."

I think that kind of says it all. O'Brien is the best one on the show who knows how to make things run. In the old *Star Trek* they let Scotty do everything, but I don't think O'Brien is anything like Scotty. He's thinner and he doesn't speak in a bad Australian accent. The producers know better than to imitate him, so they have made him different. He is "Operations", not "Engineering".

You also said something about there being no humor in the show. I think there is. For example, Odo and Quark. they have a tension relationship, but you can tell they really like each other. Besides, Quark is named after Richard Benjamin, and he is funny, too. It's one of those little "inside" jokes not everyone will get. Sometimes in the new *Star Trek* you have to think a little more.

I know you don't like the way the aliens are portrayed on the shows. Well, what the h*** do you expect? They can't put extra arms or heads or elbows onto them easily, so they did the next thing. Besides, I have a friend who is going to major in botany when he gets the money from working at the dairy-fooz to go to college. He said it was possible for life to evolve from different animals. The life on the Klingon home world -- "Kling" -- could have evolved from crustaceans or mollusks instead of other things. That would explain what you so rudely called a "Lobster" on their heads. Darwin would like the Klingons, and the Romulans, too. (My friend says they could have evolved from eagles, or shrikes, because he thinks that although life could evolve from different stock on other planets, the basic life would be the same, or at least have similar names.)

Well, that is all I have to say. I think you are greatly underrating what is, in essence, more proof that Hollywood is not just interested in making a fast buck with no interest in continuing the integrity of the *Star Trek* legend. There is action. There is adventure (look at all the use they are getting out of the wormhole). There is intellectual gain and enlightenment on a regular basis. Mankind must first know himself, if he is, in fact, to know his universe; and, marketing is not the dangerous toy we think it is. Mr. Spock said it best, when he asked, "Jim, did you fart?"

Sincerely,
Dirk Fondue
Cincinnati, OH

*Dirk, let me speak to you here, Sparky. Just because someone doesn't like **DS9**, it doesn't mean they hate everything to do with **Star Trek**. I enjoy it, I watch it, end of story. As Bill Shatner said oh-so-well on Saturday Night Live to the blathering Trekkies, "Why don't you people get a life?"*

Dear "Thrown to the Lions":

Dan DiDio's interview with Joe Quesada in issue number 9 was a wonderful read. I think Mr. Quesada's artwork is fabulous, especially when inked by Kevin Nowlan. I have to admit, having that mean-looking Wolverine on the cover, drawn by none other than Joe Quesada, was the only reason I picked up you magazine. A month later when issue number 10 arrived in my local comic shop, I gave your magazine another shot. Although the *Alien* cover was not one of Dave Dorman's finest, I really enjoyed the interview of Dave Dorman and Steve Bissette by Lurene Haines; it was fascinating. Don't get me wrong, Dave Dorman's artwork is normally fantastic, ie. *Star Wars: Dark Empire* and *Aliens: Tribes*, but this *Alien* cover wasn't to my liking. Hey, different strokes for different folks, right?

Now, how about a suggestion? Instead of the section entitled "Comic News Flash", (this information can also be found in *Comic Shop News* and *Wizard*) why don't you guys devote a section to new talent? (You've implemented a similar idea with your "Preview" section, although this work isn't mainly from newcomers.) Each month or every other month, artists and writers could submit samples of their original pages for perusal by your readers. If the readers like what they see, the story can continue, if not... someone else gets a shot. What do you think? I think your current readers would go for it. Plus, I think you'd pull in more readers once word of mouth about this section hit the grapevine. Ask your readers, they might go for it.

"Comics Now" is a good section, albeit a tad late with the

information. Issue number 10 was mumbling about *WildStar #1, Darker Image #1,* and *Predator: Race War*... all of which have long been read by many and since put aside. Get some advanced copies, guys!!

"Getting into the Business of Comics" by Lurene Haines is an excellent section, similar in tone to Mark Gruenwald's articles in *Marvel Age*. This section is very informative for those interested in putting together a portfolio or writing samples.

I agreed wholeheartedly with Jerry Smith. In his article, "If I were Editor of X-Men", he made several strong points that I believe have crossed the minds of many who still pick up X-books. Just tie up the loose ends and get on with it!!! As Mr. Smith pointed out, Fabian Nicieza is a fine writer. His momentum is building, but you have to admit following in Chris Claremont's footsteps is something most writers would avoid like the plague. Give Fabian Nicieza some time. He'll pull it off.

Quick prediction: Jim Shooter will make comics history again. If anyone knows how to launch a new company from the ground up, it's Jim Shooter. It's reminiscent of early Marvel. I was one of the early Valiant readers, and it was due to the fact that Jim Shooter was involved. He brought the talent of Barry Windsor-Smith to my eyes. The early Valiant work was fresh and unique, but when Mr. Shooter was fired in 1992, I gathered up my extensive collection of early issues and sold them. I made a lot of money and plan to spend it on Defiant titles, because with Jim Shooter at the helm I know I'll get my money's worth and one hell of a story!

Steven G. O'Connell

Lateness is a part of life, Steve, and we'd like to think we've caught up with you guys. It's a never-ending battle, though, and we're doing our best to stay on top of it. Advanced copies are a bit harder to come by than you might think, Stephen. The main problem you run into is that the issues are practically unfinished until the day they go to press. But I'll tell you what, we're going to do what we can to get them anyway. Thanks for your comments!

Arena #13

Next!

Join us as we talk turkey with web-slinging Tom Lyle, chat with David Quinn about Dr. Strange and see what's up with Kristine Brennan and Keith Paul on their new project Lathe!

ARENA MAGAZINE

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COMICS #101
required reading

The Warlord — Week 1: Division 13
written by Randy Stradley
pencils and
color cover by Doug Mahnke
inked by Randy Elliott
$1.00 U.S., $1.25 Canada
16 color pages in
pastie-action format

Floaters #1 (of 3)
written by Sean Fagan
and Cinque Lee
interior art and
color cover by Lance Tooks
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 B&W pages, monthly

Aliens: Labyrinth #1 (of 4)
written by Jim Woodring
interior art and
painted cover by Allan Plunkett
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 color pages, monthly

Pumpkinhead #1 (of 4)
written by Gary Gerani
with Mark Patrick Carducci
interior art and
painted cover by Steven McManus
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 color pages, monthly

Marshal Law: Gang Fear #1 (of 2)
written by Pat Mills
painted interior art
and cover by Kevin O'Neill
$2.95 U.S., $3.70 Canada
32 painted color pages
saddle-stitched deluxe format
monthly

RoboCop: Mortal Coils #1 (of 4)
written by Steven Grant
inspired by Nick Grasso
inked by Bruce Patterson
painted cover by Sal Lago
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32 color pages, monthly

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS!

Marc Silvestri

Interview by Joe Martin

MARC SILVESTRI

Born: 3/29/59
Raised: Chicago, IL
School: High school art classes only
Early Influences: Frank Frazetta, Bernie Wrightson, John Buscema, Walt Disney, Norman Rockwell, Howard Pyle
Fave Comic Artists: Jack Kirby & John Buscema
First Pro. Work: *House of Mystery*, DC Comics
First Marvel Title: *Conan the Barbarian #135*
Other Past Work: *Conan the King, Web of Spider-Man, Uncanny X-Men, Wolverine*
Current Projects: *Cyber Force, Deathmate, Codename: Stryke Force, Ripclaw* miniseries & a new title: *Weapon*
Other Info: Marc is one of the six founding members of Image Comics. Fiancee - Cynthia Sullivan, currently residing in San Diego with one dog, Keesha, one cat, Jeeves, and no kids! Marc loves toys, cars, movies, basketball and working at Homage!

Joe Martin: *Marc, how did you first get involved with the Deathmate crossover?*

Marc Silvestri: Okay, basically a few of the Image guys were thinking of something big that would really create a few waves. Not as if we hadn't already with the beginning of Image in general. Six months ago or so we were fooling around with some ideas and crossovers started to come to mind immediately. Who could we crossover with? Who would we *like* to crossover with? At that point we were limited as to we knew we weren't going to crossover with Marvel...

JM: *Obviously.*

MS: Right. We were still feeling like we didn't really want to deal with those guys at the moment. DC was the next logical choice if we wanted to stay mainstream. But, again, that kind of went against what we wanted to do here.

JM: *Was DC receptive to the idea?*

MS: Well, we had actually discussed things with them for a crossover and I believe we initially made the announcement to that effect last August so... hmm, I guess my time frame is off because it was much more than six months ago! Gosh, time does fly.

JM: *Especially when you're as busy as you are.*

MS: Yeah! I'm not even sure what month this is [chuckles]. So, jeez, this was well over a year ago, about six months after we started Image...

JM: *That's what you meant to say.*

MS: That's exactly what I meant to say [laughs]! Yeah, we had initially spoke with DC and for one reason or another that kind of fell through the cracks. I think it was lack of interest in pursuing that on our part. At this time, though, Valiant was coming on very strong and being another independent such as we were, we thought

this was a natural move to make.

JM: *The crossover with Valiant?*

MS: Exactly. You have Valiant and you have Image, both of whom are very hungry, relatively young companies. Actually, I hate to use the word company with Image because we're not really structured that way.

JM: *Yes, it's much more like a conglomeration of separate studios.*

MS: Right.

But we thought the crossover was a great idea. We liked several of Valiant's characters and we liked their aggressiveness and the fact that they weren't scared to take on the Big Two.

JM: *And I'm sure that they were just as eager for the crossover?*

MS: They were just as eager as we were. That was a big plus. Again, I think that DC might have been a little cautious with us, especially in the beginning because we were so new. I believe only one or two books had actually hit the stands at that time.

JM: *Wow. So that was definitely early on.*

MS: It was quite a while ago and DC, I guess, understandably would have second thoughts about the whole thing but it never really got to that point as far as who was having second thoughts and who was the aggressor. It just kind of fizzled out.

JM: *However, it did move on to become a reality with Valiant and you played a part in it. What was that part?*

MS: I'm involved with the *Deathmate Black* which is coming out of Homage Studios obviously from Image Comics.

JM: *Which is slated for August?*

MS: Right, for August. All the books that are self-contained from both Valiant and Image are color-coded books; black,

SIL
VES
TRI
JIM
LEE

red, blue and yellow. The black comes from Homage and the red from Extreme Studios and then the blue and the yellow are from Valiant. Jim and I are working on the *Deathmate Black* as well as Brandon Peterson, Scott Clark, Greg Capullo, Brett Booth...

JM: *Now, is Greg at Homage or is he more just jumping around? I know he's doing a couple of* ***Spawn*** *issues for Todd.*

MS: Greg's an east coast guy. All the Image guys are on the west coast.

JM: *And then there's Greg [laughs].*

MS: [Laughs] Right! He's a few thousand miles away from us and I think he likes it that way. He's got a big, extended family over there and I don't think he's interested in moving out west. We'd love to have him over here. I've always been a great admirer of his work and that's the reason I gave him a call and asked him if he wanted to do some of this *Deathmate*.

JM: *Right. He's come along real quick, too.*

MS: Yeah! He's really good. I've been talking to him and it looks like we're going to be working on a project together in the not-so-distant future.

JM: *Exciting. What's the scoop?*

MS: Well, it's still in the stages of, "Sure! I'd love to do it! Let's talk!" kind of thing. I've given him the concepts and he's very interested. I'm always an optimist and as far as I'm concerned it's a "go-ahead" but until someone says it's okay to say something, I won't. I'll just say we're talking and it looks real strong.

JM: *We'll just tell the readers to keep their ears open.*

MS: Yeah. Trust me, it'll be something big. I'm tailor-making the project just for Greg's strengths. Anyone I work with I like to play off their strengths. That makes it more exciting and it makes everybody happy, too. I know that at Marvel I would hate it when I got a plot that I had no interest in drawing.

JM: *If it's not fun, you just can't put your heart into it.*

MS: No, you can't. The more you like what you're doing, the better work you're going to do.

JM: *I remember reading a Marc Silvestri interview before and you said that you were getting to the point on* ***Uncanny X-men*** *that it wasn't as fun as it was when you were initially on the title. That's why you were happy to move on to* ***Wolverine****.*

MS: You need a change.

JM: *Yeah.*

MS: It's like, I was on *Uncanny* for like three and a half years, I think. After a while, it's not that I didn't like working with Chris (Claremont), but I guess I was just kind of burnt out on the *X-Men*.

JM: *Do you prefer doing group books or solitary character books?*

MS: It's funny. I switch back and forth it seems. I need a change. I was on *X-Men* for a while, then I went to *Wolverine* for a couple of years, then...

JM: Cyber Force.

MS: Right. *Cyber Force.*

In a sense, the team books give you so much more versatility. You can concentrate on the characters that you happen to like that month and can draw the ones you want to and put the others in the background. With a single character, you're lim-

ited to that character. On the other hand, a single character, logistically speaking, is so much easier to work with.

JM: *And can make for a more cohesive story, I think. Maybe from a reader's point of view it's like the creator may be focussing on one character and the reader is like, "Hey, I want to know more about that guy!"*

MS: We're actually very sensitive to reader input. We get a lot of letters and we gauge who the readers want to see more of and learn more about and we try to incorporate that into our stories. When the *Cyber Force* series becomes regular we'll obviously have a lot more time to deal with such things and to explore various characters. It's something I'm really looking forward to.

JM: *I bet a lot of people are as well.*

MS: I hope so.

JM: *Speaking of characterization, and getting back to* ***Deathmate*** *a bit, what did you think of the inter-play between the Valiant and Image characters?*

MS: We came up with a very good solution between the two imprints that allowed us to do anything we want. We literally came up with this non-existent universe that we can even kill characters if we want to because it really won't matter over all. I think that was the key to making everyone get along with each other in that we avoided any conflicts like, "You can't do that to my guy! This is my guy! You can't just kill him!" [laughs]

JM: *Right.*

MS: I think that was something that we had settled from the onset. Then ideas just started flowing out of everybodys' heads.

JM: *Yuck!*

MS: Yeah [laughs]! We were coming up with ideas and concepts like, "Well, how about if we take Turok and rip his head off and..." You know, cool stuff like that.

JM: *[Chuckles] Cool stuff.*

MS: I mean, we're not gonna do that but wouldn't it be neat? And that's part of the whole concept is "Wouldn't it be neat?"

JM: *That's the whole* ***Deathmate*** *premise. There's one piece in particular that you did that I know for a fact has blown everybody away and that's the Turok-Ripclaw-XO-Maul team up! That piece is just awesome.*

MS: Well, that's the cover to *Deathmate Black*.

JM: *Okay, there was a lot of anticipation around the office here whether or not the cover from Homage would be by you or by Jim Lee. Obviously, it's by you.*

MS: Well, Jim did the cover for the *Deathmate Prologue* so it was fair that I did the cover for *Black*. That's all we are is just a fair bunch of guys.

JM: *[Laughs] Then there's a* ***Deathmate Epilogue****, too. Is that put out by Image?*

MS: Right. That will be put out by Image. That will be by myself and Joe Quesada. Bob Layton will be writing it and Scott Williams is doing the inks.

JM: *So we could actually*

*surmise that **Deathmate** is six books and not four?*

MS: The four color-coded books stand on their own. The *Prologue* and the *Epilogue* are the framing books.

***JM:** But you'd be crazy not to get them.*

MS: Well, you have to or you don't know what's going on [laughs]!

***JM:** [Laughs] Okay, what was your favorite Valiant character to work on?*

MS: Um, I'd have to say Turok. Mainly, it's the barbaric aspect of him. I was young when I saw my first *Tarzan* cover by Frank Frazetta. I was like seven or eight years old and I was like, "Man, this is so cool!" Ever since that day, I've been very attracted to barbaric characters like (Robert E.) Howard's *Conan* and I was reading all the Edgar Rice Burroughs' stuff -- the Mars books and the Venus books -- and they all have those barbarian aspects that I loved.

***JM:** So doing Conan was a real kick, I bet.*

MS: Oh, yeah, definitely!

***JM:** You sound a lot like Bart Sears.*

MS: Yeah, Bart seems like he'd really be into that stuff, too.

***JM:** Yeah, he does. It was a shame that he wasn't on **Turok** longer.*

MS: Right, but Todd (McFarlane) gave him an offer he couldn't refuse.

***JM:** Oh, yes... the **Spawn Annual #1**. It's going to be incredible.*

MS: You better believe it. But, uh, my favorite Valiant guy is definitely Turok.

***JM:** The stuff you did on **Conan** was very different than your style now.*

MS: Oh, yeah... unfortunately [chuckles]. But we learn by our mistakes!

***JM:** That wasn't bad stuff, Marc. I remember getting that stuff and reading it and thinking it was great stuff!*

MS: Thanks but, uh, I look back on it now and... well, every now and then a fan comes up at a con and hands me one of those to sign and I can't help but just look through it and go, "Eeeugh!"

***JM:** You shiver, huh? Well, I think you might be a little hard on yourself there.*

MS: Oh, well.

***JM:** It was good enough that it got you work.*

MS: Yeah, I can't discount it, I guess. Anything that I've done, even if I don't like it now...

***JM:** Right. Now, you actually worked for DC first, right?*

MS: Right. I worked for them for about a year after they had this new talent hunt in '81 or '82. It was at a Chicago con and myself and Jerry Ordway got our breaks at that show.

***JM:** Really? It seems that Jerry's been around longer than that!*

MS: No, we broke in at the same time.

***JM:** How about that. It doesn't seem that you've been around since '81.*

MS: Yep.

***JM:** So, do you have any thoughts of Valiant and Image in a comparison of companies? Obviously, you do.*

MS: Yes, well, there's a major difference between the two. I think the term company applies much more to Valiant than it does to Image. Image is basically just a group of goofy guys [laughs] who share an imprint -- an "i" in the corner -- then we can pretty much do what we want. I can't tell Todd what to put in his book and he doesn't tell me what to put in mine. All he does is tell me to get it out there [laughs]!

***JM:** But you do sort of check with each other to make sure*

that everything is solid in the Image Universe?

MS: Right. We share the universe, by all means.

JM: *So, anything that affects the universe in particular you'd have to check with the, uh... is there a meeting of the minds or anything?*

MS: We do phone-talking and being here with Jim (Lee), we talk, and Rob (Liefeld) isn't that far away from us. We also have a big meeting about twice a year, I guess. We've met about four times so far, all of us. Smaller groups have met more often. We get together and discuss things and concepts. If somebody were to blow up the Empire State Building then I think the rest of us would have something to say about that because that could affect our titles directly. Nothing like that has come into play so far.

JM: *Maybe in the next issue of* ***Youngblood*** *[chuckles]...*

MS: Right. But to answer the rest of your question, Valiant is a much more structured company. They have their directors and their line of command and we don't really have that. I think Valiant is structured more like the mainstream companies.

JM: *Two very different approaches...*

MS: And so far they both seem to have worked. They also have a different fan base.

JM: *Although the fan base seems to cross over a lot. The* ***Deathmate*** *was a good idea.*

MS: It just seemed like a natural to me. And we like the guys over there, too. I've known Bob Layton for a while and I have great respect for his work. I'm sorry that Barry (Windsor-Smith) is no longer over there although Jim got a chance to work with him on the *Prologue*. It would have been nice to work with him.

JM: *Yes, now he's moved on to Malibu working on his own Ultraverse title.*

MS: I wish him luck.

JM: *Working at Homage Studios around so many talented artists, how does that feel?*

MS: Homage is like a huge, out-of-control amoeba. It just keeps spreading. When I first joined up here it was Jim, Whilce (Portacio), Scott (Williams), Joe Chiodo, there was one assistant, one secretary, myself and that, I believe, was it.

JM: *Karl Alstaetter was with you guys for a while, wasn't he?*

MS: Right, for a while.

JM: *Could I ask what happened?*

MS: Karl felt that he wanted to do some things. Quite frankly, we asked him to come down to help out and to be trained as an inker. We wanted him to learn aspects of the business but he had some ideas of his own.

JM: *He wanted to lean more in an artistic direction?*

MS: I believe so. He just kind of disappeared one day.

JM: *You guys said, "Hey, where's Karl?" and started looking under desks.*

MS: [Laughs] Yeah, that's pretty much how it happened. I wish him luck, too, with what he's doing now.

JM: *Yeah, he's over at Harris working on some* ***Vampirella*** *stuff.*

MS: But, getting back to Homage, there were just those people there, how ever many that was -- 6 or 7 -- and it has just kept growing. We had some good space but it wasn't that

huge and as things began growing we had to move. Mike Heisler came in and Joe Rosas came in, although he left after a while, and then the support staff started to grow.

JM: *You had the Homage talent search.*

MS: Right, That brought in a flood of new people. For those who think that no one has been hired from that, we've actually hired about six guys. We do make the phone call and most people are surprised when Jim or I call them up.

JM: *I'm sure. That would make my day.*

MS: [Laughs] Yeah, well we do hire people and, sure enough, we got overcrowded where we were. So, we moved down the hall in the same building and practically doubled our space. Now, we're moving again! We're going to a place with 10,000 square feet! That's how much we've expanded.

JM: *That's not a studio anymore, Marc!*

MS: It's huge!

JM: *Now, you're your own company!*

MS: We have about 23 people here now.

JM: *That was Dark Horse's entire staff at like four or five years old.*

MS: Right. I don't know when it's going to stop. I just hired someone to help with administrative duties for my little part of Image. The creative energy is still here, though. It's still great to work in a place where you got guys like Jim and Scott and now the young talent that we have in here as well. It's great. Everyone just kind of feeds off of what's going on. We all walk around and look at what people are doing and go, "Oh, wow, that's cool, that's cool, that's cool" and then we go back to our tables and think, "Man, I gotta do something cooler than that!"

JM: *It goes back and forth, back and forth. I guess it really serves to be a tremendous motivating force.*

MS: Oh, yeah! It's the main reason I came down to a studio on the first place. I wanted to be around people who could, uh...

JM: *Keep your momentum going?*

MS: Yes. I'd say that 90% of the people working in this business are sitting at home by themselves drawing at the table and after a while it get very old and monotonous. It just gets to you.

JM: *That's one of the major complaints I hear from the guys working in-house.*

MS: Right. Your friends pop over and look at you like you're an idiot. They're wondering why you can't come out and shoot hoops or go out to a movie or something. They can't fathom the concept that I'm actually sitting there drawing, you know... working!

JM: *Absolutely!*

MS: Yeah, so the studio atmosphere is great. There's people here to talk about comics when you feel like talking about comics. But, uh, we go out every once in a while in a group to see the movies. We just recently went and saw *Jurassic Park* and *Cliffhanger*.

JM: *What did you think of* ***Jurassic Park****?*

MS: Oh, it was a crummy story but great effects!

JM: *Yeah, I'm sure it was a great comic book inspiration.*

MS: Tell me about it. I want to draw dinosaurs, now [laughs]!

JM: *I'm sure you can figure a way to fit them in!*

MS: Yeah, I should try to work them into *Cyber Force* somehow.

JM: *In comics you can pull anything off that you want to, especially when it's your creation.*

MS: Yeah, pretty much.

JM: *Speaking in those terms, you've got the new Cyber Force series coming out.*

MS: In October and, if everybody will try not to laugh when

I say this, it will be a monthly book [chuckles]. Now, the company is up and running. I don't have to worry about dealing with things on the phone...

JM: *The more editorial duties...*

MS: Right. I've got people doing that for me now and I'll be well-prepared before issue #1 comes out. A lot of things that people don't understand is that when Image started it actually happened much faster than we really wanted it to. Most of us were actually still working for Marvel Comics when the news hit. It was like, "Boy, we need to do something about this and do it now," you know. I know that Whilce and Jim and I were still working in the "X-Office."

JM: *On Uncanny X-Men, X-Men and Wolverine...*

MS: Yes, and I felt it wasn't fair at all to leave Bob Harras (*X-Men* editor) dangling. After I made the decision to go to Image, I told Bob that I would do three more issues. Unfortunately, I had to do those three issues before I ever got a chance to start on *Cyber Force*. That was a mad panic. Not only did I have to start a new company, I had to start an entire new concept. Hitting it right out of the box was something I really had to worry about.

JM: *So, the thing is that you kept a monthly schedule for years at Marvel and there's no reason, now that you have people handling all the other stuff that was taking up your time, that you can't do it now.*

MS: Right. On most days, I wasn't able to sit down at the drawing table until it was two or three in the afternoon. That's not good. Now, that all the business stuff is being taken care of, we're ready to get down to the business of drawing. I've been talking to Jim and he's doing the same thing. He's ripping right through the *WildC.A.T.S.* stuff and I'm hitting the *Cyber Force* stuff and people are going to be surprised in November when, lo and behold, *Cyber Force* #2!

JM: *Great.*

MS: It's like what you said, for years I was doing monthly books. All this other stuff has been taken out of the way and I'm back to doing it, and I'm enjoying myself.

JM: *That will make a lot of retailers happy.. readers, too.*

MS: Yeah! A lot of retailers and readers have been coming up to me and saying, "What's up with you, man? What are all these delays?" You know, I don't like to see the book not out there, either. I want to see the book on the stands. It only hurts me when it's not out there. But it wasn't because I was sleeping. There's a lot of things to do.

JM: *Of course. Can we talk about the actual story of* ***Cyber Force****? What do the readers*

have to look forward to?

MS: Okay, uh, there's not going to be some huge jump years in the future. It's going to pick up where the old series left off. Actually, it's going to pretty much pick up where *Cyber Force* #0 leaves off. Walt Simonson is doing that and it will come out at least two weeks after *Cyber Force* #4 which will make it out of here the last week of July. Like I said earlier, I'm really looking forward to the regular series because it will give me a chance to really define the characters. Fans do have their definite favorites and they do want to see more of those characters.

JM: *Is it the same team?*

MS: Yes. Well, actually, there will be some additions -- a few changes here and there -- but pretty much the same team. The changes are for the better.

JM: *Everybody wants to see more of Stryker.*

MS: Stryker's getting his own series. It's going to be ongoing. It's called *Codename: Strykeforce* and that is actually the first spinoff from *Cyber Force*. That's Strykeforce with a "y".

JM: *Very clever.*

MS: Yes, I know [laughs]. Anyway, it's a series that I'm writing and Brandon Peterson is going to be drawing and the stuff that he's done so far is by far the best stuff of his career. People looking at it, it's knocking them out. It's great, great stuff and I'd like to say that this is great for me. I've never written on my own. I'm working with my brother (Eric Silvestri) on *Cyber Force* but this is the first time I've actually written entirely on my own.

JM: *Writing is fun.*

MS: It is. I'm having a good time and Brandon and I seem to be working real well together. We make a really good team. A lot of times with things it's like,

"Gee, I really want to work on this but what if we don't mesh?" With Brandon, that wasn't a problem. We have a perfect "creative marriage." What he draws, the scripting just flies right out of it.

JM: *Is he inking, too?*

MS: I believe Scott Williams will be inking the first issue. Then we have Mark Pennington who will be doing the rest of the series. He's been doing work on the X-books over at Marvel. He's a great inker in the mold of Scott Williams.

Oh, also Brandon is a fast penciller. This book will be monthly easily right out of the bag.

JM: *Gotta love those fast guys.*

MS: Yeah [laughs]!

JM: *Especially if they're good.*

MS: That's a nice combination. I'm finding myself in a position where I have to deal with freelancers and the thing I'm looking for is dependability. That's why the idea of working with Greg Capullo is so appealling. He's a great talent, definitely, but he's also very dependable.

JM: *I'm looking forward to whatever you have to announce concerning that project.*

MS: I'm certain we'll have something to announce by the San Diego Con.

JM: *Let's talk about Ripclaw, then.*

MS: Ripclaw is essentially the most popular *Cyber Force* character.

JM: *Well, he's got claws. What can you say?*

MS: He's got claws [laughs].

JM: *It's all in the name.*

MS: Yeah. He's also the most fun for me to draw.

JM: *Right. I notice he's in the foreground a lot.*

MS: My brother keeps complaining, "Why do you always put him in the front?" And I'm like, "Because I like to draw him, that's why!" We're going to give some of the other characters a chance to shine, though, when the regular series comes out.

JM: *Everybody loves to see the "Silvestri females," too, you know.*

MS: Yeah, yeah. I was surprised how popular characters like Cyblade and Velocity were. We're going to be using them a lot in the regular series, concentrating especially on Cyblade. She's a very mysterious character. I like to keep mystery surrounding my characters. Some people ask, "Hey, what's up with these characters?" But I don't want to know the end of a mystery before I get to it.

JM: *Sort of like flipping to the last page of a book. I got a friend who does that and is always trying to show it to me.*

MS: It drives you nuts! But the mystery is just the style that I like to do. In the regular series there will be plenty of time to define these characters more but I didn't want to put all my

tricks out on the table in just four issues.

***JM:** In the Ripclaw miniseries will you be doing the art?*

MS: No, the art will be done by a new guy by the name of Jordan Raskin.

***JM:** That name sounds familiar. Did he do some work for Dark Horse?*

MS: Yes! He did. Unfortunately, I don't think that project accurately showcased his talents. It was a *Predator* book and there seemed to be some production problems with it. I had seen the pencils and, in fact, he had sent things in to the Homage talent hunt and I gave him a call that very night. It's dynamic stuff he's doing. Very cool.

By the way, I teamed him up with Kevin Nowlan.

***JM:** Yow!*

MS: Yeah, that's what I said. That made my day when I called Kev and offered him the gig amd he accepted. I felt really nice about that. The two of them mesh well because Jordan actually draws a bit like Kevin. Actually, more than a bit. You'd see if you saw the pencils.

***JM:** If he can do a good Predator, I'm sure he can do a good Ripclaw.*

MS: He does a great Ripclaw. The book itself is probably going to be out in December.

***JM:** Will it focus on Ripclaw's Indian heritage any?*

MS: Yes. On his history and entwined with that will be an actual brand new adventure, not one of those flashback books. There may be a flashback once in a while in order to see his roots. This will be written by my brother.

***JM:** His first solo writing job?*

MS: Right. He can do whatever he wants with it. He's plotting it and scripting it and all I'm doing is editing to make sure the continuity is okay.

***JM:** Is Eric a big brother or a little brother?*

MS: Big brother.

***JM:** Then you gotta let him do it, huh?*

MS: Well, you know. Actually, he's very easy to work with. He's been in the business for quite a few years and he's willing to learn. *Cyber Force* is his first professional job and I think he's doing a damn good job right out of the box.

***JM:** Everything is doing real well and it looks like you'll be keeping your hands busy doing the Cyber Force regular series.*

MS: Right. There's the regular series and the *Strykeforce* book and the *Ripclaw* series and the other series... which, I can actually name it for you if you like.

***JM:** Let's do it.*

MS: It's called *Weapon*. That's the project that I'm hoping my pal, Greg, and I can get together on. It looks like it's going to happen but I can't say definitely just yet.

***JM:** Sounds like a good year.*

MS: I've got things happening with the books and merchandising. There's a lot to do and it's very exciting and I really appreciate all the patience that the readers and the retailers have shown. I promise those guys won't be disappointed. It's definitely going to be exciting.

COMICS

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Autograph Giveaway #1

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Fight for the Dragon! That's Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon! Hey, the combat is really simple. All you have to do is make a photocopy of the cover of this issue of Arena that you're holding in your hands and write your name, age, address and number on the back of the copy! You're not finished yet! This is a struggle! Put the copy in an envelope and send it to: Autograph Giveaway #1, c/o Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky 41042. Deadline (no if's, and's or butt's) is September 1st, 1993.
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Comic News

AC News

Introducing *Femforce Up Close #1*, a new series written and inked by Mark Heike, with pencils by Dave Roberts. A disastrous night at a rock concert has General Gordon and Captain Kelly pushing for the ousting of Synn from the Femforce. These events spur Nightveil to do some soul-searching. What is the bond between them that makes Laura so protective of The Girl From LSD? Also, the mysterious Darkfire returns...but is she friend or foe? Find out in "For the Sake of What Should Have Been.", the collectors edition first issue of this new, quarterly companion series to the *Femforce* title. This book is designed to focus on the personal lives of the individual members. This title is printed in full color.

Apple News

Blazing Combat: World War I and World War II features art by Severin, Toth, Colan, and Wood, with a great Wally Wood cover! The first *Blazing Combat* mini-series earned enthusiastic recommendations from everyone who previewed it. Now, Apple's new (lower-priced!) collection of classics from Warren Publishing's censored masterpiece -- *Blazing Combat: World War I and World War II* -- is exciting them again! And here's why:

* "The Battle of Britain" -- the story of the daring British pilots who saved their nation from the onslaught of Hitler's Luftwaffe, superbly written and illustrated by the incomparable Wally Wood! See why their unflagging courage inspired Winston Churchill's famous tribute: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

* "U-Boat" -- Archie Goodwin and Gene Colan's look at the paranoia and claustrophobia of submarine warfare.

* "Souvenirs!" -- John Severin's intensely realistic artwork makes this Archie Goodwin story about a souvenir-hungry soldier all the more chilling.

* "Lone Hawk" -- Goodwin and Alex Toth tell the story of Canada's amazing WWI flying ace, Billy Bishop. Toth's depiction of the aerial ballet of death between classic dueling biplanes is nothing short of brilliant!

Blazing Combat: World War I and World War II is 32-pages, printed on quality paper (better than the original!), with superb reproduction of these classic stories taken from the original printer's films! Ships in August with a $3.75 cover price.

Blackmore News

New Color Comic Unveiled

Blackmore Publishing has announced that it will publish a new full color comic in September. The comic is entitled *Factual Illusion*. The story is a collision between the scientific world of virtual reality with the macabre world of the supernatural. It is a fast paced thriller with a very detailed plot. The first chapter of the ongoing series was published this past April in *Gareth Blackmore's Unusual Tales #1. GBUT#1* completely sold out, so it may be tough to find in stores. However, the first chapter will be reprinted (in full color) and included with the second chapter in *Factual #1.*

Factual Illusion #1 will be a hefty 32 pages with no advertisements. The cover price is a reasonable $3.95. The art is by Kyle (*Cold Blooded*) Hotz and newcomer Pav Kovacic. The story is done by Dan DeBono. This book promises to bring something different to comic fans -- a great story and terrific art. If you like a lot of plot (as opposed to the countless "no-plot-mutant ripoffs" that are flooding the industry), this one's for you!

To insure a great response, Blackmore artists, writers, and promotional people have been on a "grass roots" promotional tour visiting comic shops in the following states: Michigan, California, Ohio, Indiana, New York, Florida, and Georgia, with more to come in the following months! *Factual* writer, Dan DeBono, believes that is the way to promote an independent. "We have changed the minds of a lot of

store owners.. at first they thought 'Oh no, another independent,' but after showing them our stuff, they all get pretty geeked," he said. There will also be posters, t-shirts, buttons, and other promotional material available soon!

Blue Comet News

Bladesmen Series Takes Off

Coming this summer is the *Bladesmen Super Special #0*, scheduled for July release and featuring Tim Vigil front and back covers that double as trading cards. These will be the first trading cards available from Blue Comet Press. There are two complete stories in the *'Super Sp.* that tell of the forming of The Bladesmen; an elf, centaur, amazon, and barbarian, each the best Bladesmen and warrior from their collective kingdoms. They have banded together to stop the evil wizardess Arkella the Arcane, who threatens to take over all four kingdoms. Pencils are supplied by Steven Hughes of *Evil Ernie* fame and inks are by Craig Stormon, creator and writer for *Bladesmen*.

The second story tells of the return of the Bladesmen to their homes, only to find that the evil sorcerer Kalakus took over while they were off fighting Arkella! Demons, two-headed monsters, magic, and mayhem reign as the team then has to rid the kingdoms of the unwanted ruler!

The fabulous artwork of Hughes and Stormon give the *Bladesmen Super Special #0* the power to be an extremely popular book with 44 pages and Tim Vigil trading cards and covers for $3.50.

Bladesmen Undersea #1 will

follow-up coming in November '93 with an excellent new story! Dell (Marvel UK) Barras will do covers and talented newcomer Matt Wilson and Steven (*Evil Ernie*) Hughes pencil, with inks and story by creator Craig Stormon (regular inker on Hero's *Tigress*)!

Bladesmen Undersea #1 has the team going after King Dargores's soul that is lost in the end of the *Super Sp. #0* to the Undersea Gods. They are collecting souls to empower themselves to again take control of the planet as supreme gods! The Bladesmen get fabulous new "Magical Armor" that can appear and disappear at will! They also travel in the new Captain Nemo-like submarine to the undersea kingdom of Nathrodene! One of the biggest battles ever seen in a BCP comic takes place as the Bladesmen go toe-to-toe with the Elementus, Gods of the Elements!

The *Bladesmen Undersea #1* is 30 full pages of art and story, with airbrush colored covers by Dell Barras, poly-bagged with a trading card of the Barras cover included, all for $3.50 cover price for November '93.

Caliber News

Realm/ Deadworld Crossover

The devastation of Daemonstorm on the world of the Realm has opened the interdimensional gates and the dead enter to bring the Realm under their control as another Deadworld! Also, the great evil known as Terroreck has returned from the darkness to lay claim to all of the walking dead. Stuck in the middle between the two warring factions are the night creatures and they hold the only key to the survival of the Realm. This 3-issue mini-series is written by Kyle Garrett, pencilled by Chris Morea, and inked by The Dead and Realm's Jason Moore!

A special collector's set will be available for the launch of this much anticipated mini-series! Included in this set well be one copy of each of the two cover versions, a limited edition print exclusive to this set, a *Deadworld* trading card, and the very first *Realm* trading card! Plus, as if this wasn't enough, Caliber is throwing in early issues of the *Realm* and *Deadworld* to make this a truly collectible set. Check with your store for price and availability.

New Series on Fire

This is it! This may be the black and white comic event of the year! *Fire* tells the unique and powerful story of a young man's virgin journey through the complex world of international intel-

ligence. Based loosely on events in the American covert community during the Reagan era, we are taken from the streets of Cleveland to all four corners of the globe. This intense thriller is told with a unique film-noir style, printed on beautiful white bond paper. No grundgie newsprint here! The cover is an impressive full color photo-illustration in the tradition of the old pulp novels and movies of the same genre. The cover price is only $2.95 for a 48-page powerhouse. That's right, 48 pages of story and art for only $2.95 -- two dollars off the regular cover price for a book in this format! There will be no ads... no letter pages... and no in-house ramblings! If you crave intelligent, exciting, well-produced, no gimmick, independent comics... your search is over! From Brian Michael Bendis, artist of *The Realm* and *Quivers*.

Dark Horse News

Brand-Spanking New Grendel

Grendel returns in *Grendel Tales: Four Devils, One Hell* #1! Hot on the heels of Matt Wagner's popular *Grendel: War Child*, this new series is bound to take readers by storm! In the post-apocalyptic world of the future, the Grendel clans are taking over -- much to the dismay of a certain private eye who's been called in to investigate a murder, an investigation that takes him to New Orleans, where he finds himself smack in the middle of not one, but four Grendels... and devils they are, indeed! This six-issue series is written by (*The Terminator: Endgame*) Robinson and lovingly hand-painted by soon-to-be fan-favorite artist Teddy H. Kristiansen. Creator Matt Wagner collaborates with Kristiansen on a stunning cover.

Steel Harbor: Barb Wire

All *Steel Harbor* titles are written by Chris Warner. *Barb Wire* features the creative talents of Paul Gulacy and Dan Davis with a cover by Dave Dorman! She's blond, beautiful, and bad to the bone -- she's Barb Wire, bounty hunter with an attitude. The savage streets of Steel Harbor are ruled by human predators with prices on their heads. The highest price comes for the bad boys with super-powers, and big game is Barb's specialty. But when the events in Golden City set of a firestorm of violence in Steel Harbor's urban jungle, Barb finds herself in danger of being burned alive -- literally!

The Machine

Steel Harbor continues with *The Machine*, pencilled and inked by James O'Barr with a Mike Mignola cover! Avram Roman was once a man -- now he's The Machine, a living soul trapped within a biomechanical scarecrow of flesh and metal. Inhumanly strong, virtually indestructible, The Machine is a powerful ally of Barb Wire, who'll need all the help she can get when she comes face to face with the overwhelming firepower of Mace Blitzkrieg, overlord of Steel Harbor's super street gangs.

Wolf Gang

The third *Steel Harbor* installment is *Wolf Gang*, with everything done by Chris Warner himself! Mace Blitzkrieg and his Prime Movers stand on the verge of seizing total control of Steel Harbor's embattled streets. Only one thing stands in their way: Wolf Gang. These five deadly super streetfighters -- Breaker, Bomber, Cutter, Burner, Hunter -- are the only force strong enough to stand up to Mace and his super-gangsters, and they'll defend their turf by any means necessary. But Blitzkrieg has the element of surprise, and only Barb Wire and The Machine may be able to bail out Wolf Gang -- if the Gang doesn't kill them first!

Motorhead

Steel Harbor wraps up with *Motorhead*, pencilled, inked, and

cover-drawn by Vince Giarrano! Frank Fletcher has something in his head -- The Motor -- that makes him off-the-scale powerful -- and dangerous. You see, Frank hears voices, voices that tell him to use his power, something Frank just doesn't want to do. Nobody tells Frank Fletcher what to do, and so the power grows within him, threatening to reach a cataclysmic critical mass. The battle between Wolf Gang and the Prime Movers, however, just might get Frank's attention -- and the attention of Motorhead can make a hurricane seem like a cool summer breeze!

DC News

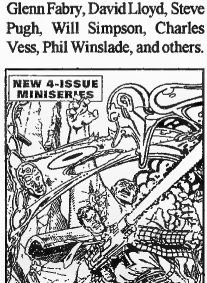
True Confessions in Hellblazer

Critically-acclaimed *Hellblazer* writer Garth Ennis, with the help of talented series artist Steve Dillon, peels back a frightening bit of the past for one of the core characters of DC's Vertigo line. One of the most disturbing incidents in John Constantine's youth returns to haunt him with a vengeance in *Hellblazer Special #1*, a wrenching tale of horrifying deceits, grisly insanity, and the infernal secrets of Constantine's most hateful adversary.

Constantine's seemingly random encounter with a murderer triggers painful flashbacks: a teenaged Constantine had narrowly escaped the same killer. This "coincidence" prefigures a grisly fate for John, as secret forces conspire to pull him one step closer to his impending confrontation with the First of the Fallen. In the shadows of a London church, Constantine learns a terrible truth about his past -- and gains a clue to the nature of his ultimate foe.

Hellblazer Special #1 is a self-contained story that serves as the perfect introduction to *Hellblazer* for new readers. At the same time, it ties into and builds on the storyline currently running through *Hellblazer*.

Hellblazer Special #1 also features a bonus pinup section by such artists as Richard Case, Glenn Fabry, David Lloyd, Steve Pugh, Will Simpson, Charles Vess, Phil Winslade, and others.



Metal Men Forged Anew

The creative team behind the record-breaking *Superman #75* delivers a bold, new adventure of the Metal Men, in a 4-issue miniseries that marks the return of the cybernetic sextet. Kicking off with a multi-colored foil-enhanced cover on issue #1, *Metal Men* will attract comics fans of all ages like a magnet with its fresh presentation of these classic DC characters.

Written by Superman editor Mike Carlin, and illustrated by Dan Jurgens and Brett Breeding, *Metal Men* tells a story that will shock readers of their original series and still remain completely accessible to new ones. The action and intrigue begin when a strange meteor crashes on Earth, and Doctor Will Magnus reluctantly deploys his robotic creations to retrieve it. But another party is also interested in the meteor and won't hesitate to destroy the Metal Men to possess it. In a devastating attack against Magnus Robotics, a secured chamber on Level 12 is forced open. What the team finds inside shakes them to the core, as a secret Magnus has long kept hidden is revealed, and all that the Metal Men had previously understood about their origins is challenged. By the end of the mini-series, those revelations will have altered the team forever.

Will the Real Supes Please Stand

A good man is hard to find; the real Superman, even harder. Just ask Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, the Cadmus Project, and/or Lex Luthor. Since Superman's mysterious resurrection in *Adventures of Superman #500*, all eyes in Metropolis have been turned skyward, hoping to catch a fleeting glimpse of their high-flying champion: The one, true Metropolis Marvel. But alas, all that greets their eager glances are birds, planes, and more ersatz Supermen than you can hurl a chunk of plaid Kryptonite at. Similarly, in comic book stores and newsstands around the "real" world, the same question resounds: Which of these guys, if any, is the genuine article?

The answer comes in *Superman #82*, when comicdom's most indomitable superguy once again steps to the fore. Look for it sometime in August, after which readers can follow the continu-

ing adventures of the "real" Superman in *Adventures of Superman #505* and *Action Comics #692* (also scheduled for an August release).

Defiant News

More New Titles

With *Plasm* -- Defiant's first comic series -- available in this month's *Previews*, Jim Shooter's new company is getting into the swing of things with eight more titles being developed to debut in the next 12 months.

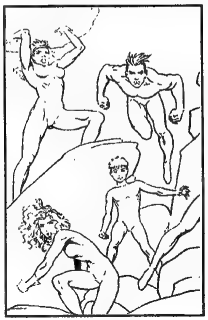
Dark Dominion is next on the drawing board, featuring the character Michael Alexander, an ordinary looking man who can see evil forces that are invisible to most people. These sinister entities inhabit a substrata of reality and are plotting to convert the world into a Dark Dominion of their own. The series is being written by Shooter, with art by Steve Ditko and Steve Leialoha.

The next title is *The Good Guys*, written by Mike Barr and drawn by Ken Hooper. The story features seven kids, ages eight through sixteen, who attended a comics convention near ground zero of a quantum phenomenon known as "a wish bomb." While most people in the surrounding area were either wishing for simple things like getting a favorite creator's autograph, a good deal on lunch, or maybe not hoping for anything at all, these seven kids were thinking about being super heroes.

"I'd like *The Good Guys* to have the same impact on readers of today that *The Legion of Super-Heroes* and the original *X-Men* had on readers back in the '60's," Barr said.

Although the first issue of *The Good Guys* is scheduled to ship in November, fans can start reading the adventures of these characters in an exclusive strip in *Previews*. The first installment of this 12-part story will be four pages long and debut in *Previews #7*. The rest of the installments will each be two pages in length, like the exclusive *Aliens: Earth Angel* strip by John Byrne, currently running in *Previews*.

To also promote *The Good Guys*, Defiant is going to coordinate a nationwide talent search for seven kids who fit the descriptions and personalities of the characters in the comics. The kids who are "cast" for *The Good Guys* will win special prizes -- which have not been determined at press time -- but may include college scholarship funds, trips, and other items that will be both educational and fun.



Shooter will also be co-writing *War Dancer*, with artist Alan Weiss, about a mysterious stranger who claims to be trying to save the world, but may actually destroy it in the process.

Titles to follow that are currently in some stage of development include *Charlemagne, Prudence & Caution, Dogs of War*, and *Mongrel*. All these titles will be founded in the Defiant Universe and have some tie to the events established in *Plasm*. Helping Shooter shape the Defiant Universe is former *X-Men* writer Chris Claremont. Claremont will eventually be writing at least one series for Defiant, as will Roger Stern, current writer on *Action Comics*.

Digital News

Future Shock

Nearly a decade after the publication of his *Shatter* (the first computer-generated comic book), Mikes Saenz hopes to fulfill the promise and vision of that groundbreaking effort with Digital Comics -- an all-new publishing company dedicated to the production of high-tech comic books for the new age. Their first release -- a mature readers book entitled *Donna Matrix #1*, published under the Reactor imprint -- tells the story of "a 21st century Pleasure Droid gone haywire" with advanced 3D modeling and state-of-the-art computer imaging.

Donna Matrix #1 premieres in

August, contains 48 full-color pages, and carries a retail price of $2.95.

Fleetway News

Flesh Facts

Dinosaurs may be interesting to look at in books or museums, but to really enjoy them as nature intended, they should be grilled with a light honey-mustard sauce! The fine folks at the Time To Time Corporation make just such a treat possible! By traveling back to the Age of Dinosaurs, they can harvest all the meat you can eat, at a fraction of the cost you'd have to pay for puny little steers or chickens! Using the latest in state-of-the-art equipment, they can stun, kill, gut, butcher, and prepare a Tyrannosaurus before you can say, "Waiter, may I please see the wine list!"

But not all is well in the Jurassic period, for deep in the jungle there is a wild child -- raised by the ancient reptiles as one of their own. Her name is Shamana, and she's raising holy hell! Attacking the Company, she and her tribe of dinosaurs plot to repel the strange-smelling, chainsaw wielding, bloodthirsty invaders and send them back to their own damn time!

Written by the creator of the original *Flesh* series, Pat Mills takes a trip back in time to take another look at man's inhumanity to anything he can capture, control, torture, and then eat! This new series is painted in glorious detail and style by Carl Critchlow -- yet another British artist destined to suffer the fame and fortune of a Simon Bisley! His illustrations of dinosaurs are meticulously researched, amazingly expressive and awesomely powerful!

Harris News

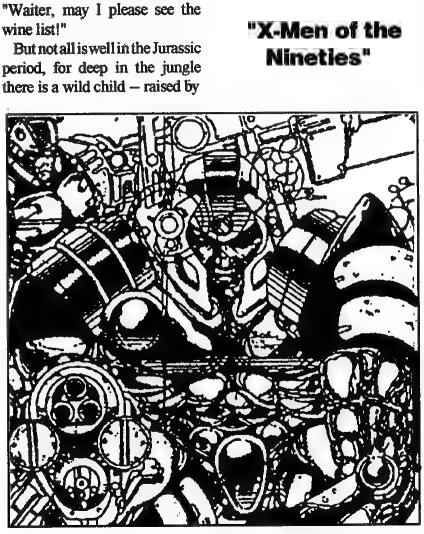
"X-Men of the Nineties"

Okay, okay. We know that the X-Men are really the X-Men of the nineties, but you get the idea! Written and drawn by Karl Altstaetter (formerly of Jim Lee's Homage Studios), *Q-Unit #1* follows the cyberpunk/super-hero adventures of an Eisenhower Era Earth Scientist who, after surviving his abduction to an alien world, endures a series of genetic experiments that turn him into a cybernetic super soldier.

Translation: Both *X-Men* fans and Image devotees should find plenty to like in this fast-paced, sci-fi action series.

Q-Unit #1 is scheduled for a September release.

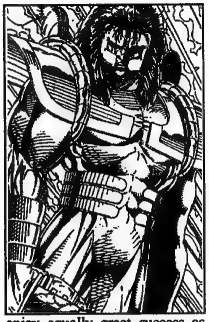
Extreme's Fall Plans



With summer just kicking into high gear, Image Comics' Extreme Studios has announced its plans for the upcoming fall season with a line-up that includes several all-new titles, as well as the long-awaited return of Image's flagship title, *Youngblood*.

In September, hot on the heels of the Image/Valiant *Deathmate* cross-over, Image will release the first issue of the new *Prophet* series, chronicling the on-going adventures of Youngblood's most popular ally. Written by Rob Liefeld, *Prophet* will be the product of a joint venture between Liefeld and Image newcomer Dan Panosian, who will be doing finished pencils and inks on the book.

One of the most popular inkers in comics, Panosian's work has graced the pages of most, if not all of Marvel's X-books at one time or another. *Prophet* marks Panosian's first pencilling assignment as he joins Whilce Portacio and Art Thibert as one of many top inkers who have gone on to



enjoy equally great success as pencillers.

"We're all tremendously excited about this," said editor Eric Stephenson. "Ever since Rob first introduced him in the pages of *Youngblood #2*, Prophet has been a firm favorite with the readers and I think the pairing of Rob's and Dan's talents on this book is just going to sweeten the deal."

The first *Prophet* storyline will follow the time-displaced warrior on his quest to re-establish contact with his primary source of power, a futuristic communications satellite code named D.O.C.C. (Direct Orbital Command Center). Along the way, Prophet will also seek to uncover the whys and wherefores surrounding his mysterious creation.

September also marks the release of *Team Youngblood*, a new on-going series focusing on the members of Youngblood's "away team." Written by Rob Liefeld and Eric Stephenson, *Team Youngblood* will be pencilled by Image rookie Chap Yaep and inked by Norm Rapmund, the same team behind this summer's *Youngblood Yearbook*.

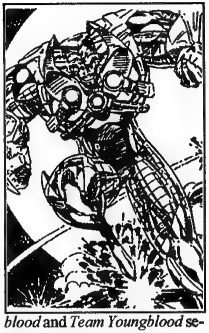
"Chap's one of the brightest talents currently working here or anywhere else in comics," Stephenson said. "And I think that shows in the kind of assignments he's being handed, as well as the quality of work he's turning out. Rob's very skittish about letting other people handle Youngblood -- they're his babies -- but Chap's the perfect babysitter."

The series opens with a group of cybernetic terrorists lead by *Youngblood Strikefile* villain Giger as he and Cybernet hi-jack the space shuttle, enabling them to take control of the earth via a complex network of communications satellites. The first issue will deal primarily with Sentinel as he puts his team -- Photon, Cougar, Riptide, and three new members -- through their paces on their inaugural mission.

And in October, Image marks the return of its first and finest super-team as *Youngblood* returns as a regular, on-going series with issue #5. Written and pencilled by Rob Liefeld with inks by Danny Miki and colors by Steve Oliff and Olyoptics, *Youngblood #5* will reintroduce fans to the members of Youngblood's "home team" -- Shaft, Die Hard, Bedrock, Chapel, and Vogue -- as well as two new characters.

Stephenson said that while *Youngblood* will continue to be filled with all the energy and excitement readers have come to expect from Rob over the years, Rob will be slowing things down a bit when the series returns this fall. "One of the most appealing aspects of Rob's work is the roller coaster ride he takes readers on each issue, but that doesn't preclude taking time out along the way to examine who the characters are," Stephenson explained. "A lot of people have this perception of Rob as this guy who can only do full-steam ahead action stuff, so I think fans are going to be pleasantly surprised with what he has planned for *Youngblood*."

To emphasize Extreme's confidence in the upcoming *Youngblood* and *Team Youngblood* series, Stephenson added that no cover gimmicks would be featured on either book. "Response to *Youngblood: Strikefile* has been overwhelmingly positive," he said. "So we feel that fan support on these books is such that we don't need to use cover gimmicks to bolster sales."



"Cover enhancements are nice -- and we've been very happy with the ones we've used up to this point -- but we want to put out books that will be around for the next few years; books that appreciate in the fan's minds moreso than in their pocket books."

Kitchen Sink News

Makes Your Flesh Crawl

They've been stranded on Earth for 20 years, and they haven't been sitting idle. They've been absorbing the flesh, blood, and DNA of human beings in a graphically nasty manner, and one of them might be hungry and sitting next to you.

They're *Flesh Crawlers*, and

this August Kitchen Sink Press is publishing a three-issue comic book series of that name by writer Richard Rainey and artist Michael Dubisch, a new writer-artist team in the comics firmament.

Flesh Crawlers # 1 is a 32-page b&w comic book retailing for $2.50. It is for all ages. It will be published bi-monthly.

Richard Rainey has written *Punisher: War Journal* for Marvel Comics, and for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, among others. Michael Dubisch's art has appeared in *Gore Shriek* and *Raw Media*, but he is a relative newcomer to comics. This is Rainey and Dubisch's first extended work in comic books, and their first teamup. Kitchen Sink is excited about publishing this horror-fantasy work by them, believing these guys will make a big impact in comics.

Flesh Crawlers is centered in the Adirondack Mountain town of Bellecour, on Lake Chaplain. An alien rescue ship has landed near a religious camp intending to consolidate the considerable band of changed aliens. The ship sends out a powerful beacon to the survivors, and soon an exodus of Flesh Crawlers, in human form, shamble toward Bellecour.

Opposing them is a secret government group of scarred war vets called Force Majure. This band of kamikazes has been battling the invaders since a crashed ship was found in the New Mexico desert two decades before.

Complicating matters is an incident involving one of the religious campers. He is absorbed by a Flesh Crawler, and the alien must reassume the human's form when a search is instituted. Found apparently dead, the man/thing comes back to life before the eyes of the religious cult, and is hailed as the new Lazarus.

This sparks the interest of the publisher of a super-market tabloid, who concocts a UFO story involving a starlet craving publicity, and...

And that's all we're going to tell you about this thrilling, ironic, and exciting new series. Except that Force Majure moves into the area, armed to the teeth and looking for aliens. Readers will be entertained mightily by Rainey's story and Dubisch's art in this terrific new series. Watch for *Flesh Crawlers # 1* in August!

The Oddity Odyssey Collection

Michael Allred's *Madman* has become a cult hit following its unusual birth in *Graphik Musik* and the publication of the *Madman* series by Tundra.

With its attractive mix of wild humor, pop culture, references, violence, and bold art, Allred's creation is one of the freshest comics being created today.

Now, the first three books in this increasingly popular series have been collected into one beautifully produced 144-page softcover volume. Called *Madman: The Oddity Odyssey*, the book is printed in two colors on heavy coated stock, features a spot-varnished cover, and retails for the bargain price of $9.95. The book, which also boasts flip action corners, so you can watch Madman dance, is for all ages.

In *Oddity Odyssey*, a costumed figure who possesses some super-heroic powers -- mainly the ability to use a lead-filled yo-yo and a slingshot to deadly effect -- searches for his true identity in a bizarre world of eccentric scientists and evil master criminals. Dressed as Mister Excitement, a 1950's comic book super-hero, Madman has no memory of any previous existence, and finds it impossible to lift his mask and look in a mirror.

To top it off, he's psychic, and he's confronted by murderers, zombie-like clones of a life-after-death researcher, and surly bus drivers.

Michael Allred propels the story through its 144 pages "with an idiosyncratic sense of story-telling to create a unique blend of the absurd and the beautiful," according to Mark Schultz, creator of *Xenozoic Tales*. And it's true; *Madman: The Oddity Odyssey* is a lot of fun -- entertaining and thoughtful at the same time. Ships in August.

Lightning News

The Launches Continue

Lightning Comics will be debuting two more full color unlimited monthly titles this year: *Judgment Day* (Sept.) and *Perg* (Oct.). September and October are going to be critical months in terms of Lightning Comics sales.

Steve Zyskowski, Vice President explains, "We've carefully

planned the releases of *Judgment Day* and *Perg*. We felt that September and October were perfect months. We believe that end of year sales of Lightning's comics will be very impressive."

Sales for *Bloodfire #1* were impressive for a new independent's first comic (debuting in a very competitive month of June). *Bloodfire #1* sold over 36,000 copies (and still climbing) in the direct market.

Joe Zyskowski, Lightning's President, feels that once comic shop owners see how fast *Bloodfire #1* sells in their shops in June, they're going to order very heavy for September and October. He believes that consumer reaction to the *Bloodfire* story will warrant an increase in dealer orders.

Lightning Comics is in the industry to compete -- not to observe. Artwork and stories for all books continue to improve.

All of the leading comic book fanzines will be covering Lightning's new universe. "We believe that when 1993 is over, Lightning Comics will be considered the biggest surprise of the year!" Steve Zyskowski added.

Judgment Day ships with a red prism cover. 1 in every 15 copies that dealers order will feature a rare gold prism cover. *Perg* will ship with a special flip cover design. One cover was pencilled and inked by Marvel Comic's top illustrator Javier Saltares, of *Ghost Rider* and *Night Thrasher* fame. That side will feature a special Halloween glow-in-the-dark cover -- perfect for October. The other cover will be created by Lightning's penciller Karl Kerschl and is reputed by Lightning to really show off his talent. Dealers ordering 25 copies of each Lighning title in October will qualify for a platinum *Perg #1*.

Malibu News

Beam Me Up... O'Brien?

Targeting *Star Trek* fans, collectors, and interested dilettantes (which, in this industry, means just about everybody), Malibu's eagerly-anticipated *Deep Space Nine* comic book series premieres inn August with a story by Mike W. Barr and art by Gordon Purcell and Terry Pallot. Two different versions of the book will be available (one with a cover by Jerome Moore, and the other with an unprecedented photo cover of the *DS9* cast), in addition to a "Dual Foil Collector's Limited Edition" featuring a combination gold/silver-foil logo and a black matte finish cover.

But long before summertime's end, fans and collectors will have two chances to sneak a peek at one of Malibu's biggest projects since the dawn of the Image Universe. In June, dedicated Trekkers can look for a special *Deep Space Nine* "ashcan" edition in the debut issue of Warrior's *Hero Illustrated*, followed closely by a *Deep Space Nine* promotional segment on the QVC TV shopping network.

Deep Space Nine -- The Direct Market Edition retails for $2.50, while the photo cover/newsstand edition carries a $1.95 cover price.

Kanalz Teams Up With Ultraverse

Malibu and Image veteran Hank Kanalz has joined the Ultraverse team! Kanalz, whose credits as a writer include *Ex-Mutants* and *Brigade*, has signed on as an editor for the hot new line from Malibu Comics!

Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm said, "Hank impressed me with his abilities. I thought he'd be the perfect choice to add to the Ultraverse team as the line expands."

Kanalz will be responsible for a number of things, including getting *Ultraverse #0* underway. Kanalz said, "It's going to be a very cool edition featuring a cover by Jim Lee! It features all new stories with the first wave of Ultraverse characters."

Kanalz is in charge of editing the Ultraverse Bible and keeping it updated. "The Ultraverse is carefully constructed and updated by a team of writers," Kanalz said. "The Bible ensures that the

foundation and all the crucial information is retentively documented." Kanalz will also be on a constant lookout for new talent for the Ultraverse.

Polishing a version of the Ultraverse Bible to be sent out to the licensing and merchandising community is another one of Kanalz's tasks. "He'll also be responsible for a lot of continuity issues and for getting special projects underway," Ulm said. "I can't tell you how happy I am to have him working with senior editor Dan Danko and me to make the Ultraverse the coolest line of comics ever!"

Firearm Explodes into Ultraverse

Alexander Swan has been many things in his lifetime. He was a soldier in the Special Boat Service. He was an agent for the Lodge – a top secret English intelligence agency. Now he's a private investigator in America, trying to stay away from life-threatening jobs.

Alexander Swan: Firearm, the latest Ultraverse title, is the story of a normal man in an ultranormal world. After a mission in England went bad, Swan (codename: Firearm) left the Lodge and made his way to the west coast of America. Writer James Robinson said, "I'm trying to portray someone who's a tired, battered warrior whose conscience makes him stay in this racket that he obviously wanted to get away from."

Swan sets himself up as a private investigator in California and somehow gets involved with case after case involving ultrahumans. "He's constantly punched around and beaten up," Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm said, "and finds himself the focus of all these cased because of his past associations and unique skills."

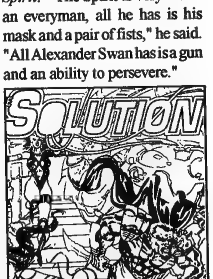
Robinson wants readers to see that Firearm isn't just a grim, hard, killing machine. "He's someone with flaws," he said. "He's someone who aches and hurts... he's perpetually aghast by the fantastic situations he sees around him and the fantastic state of the world he's in."

When he came to America, Swan became a private detective to make use of his abilities while keeping a low profile. No such luck. "Every case he takes seems to slowly crescendo into some weird encounter with ultra-beings and horror and fantasy," said Robinson. "All the things he doesn't want to be involved with."

Supporting characters in *Firearm* include his best friend Ben Travers, a thirty-something widower who is also a Pasadena police detective, and Ben's daughter. She's a '90's-style Nancy Drew character. "The Nancy Drew books have a bad rep because there's so many of them," said Robinson. "There was something special about the early ones in the '30's that I'm going to try to bring to her character."

In *Alexander Swan: Firearm #1*, Swan brings a bail jumper back to the offices Ernest Shadrack, bail bondsman. It would normally be a simple job for a P.I., but the bail jumper just happens to be an ultrapowered maniac who shoots electrical blasts from his hands. After finishing the assignment, Swan figures he's in for a little rest and relaxation. He takes a simple missing person assignment, and starts the cycle all over again. "He's very much an everyman with a talent for dealing with violent situations," Robinson said. "As opposed to somebody who revels in that sort of thing – he doesn't enjoy it."

Readers should expect nothing less than non-stop ultra-action from James Robinson, with pencils by Cully Hamner and inks by John Lowe. Robinson compared *Firearm* to Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. "The Spirit is very much an everyman, all he has is his mask and a pair of fists," he said. "All Alexander Swan has is a gun and an ability to persevere."



Ultraverse Has The Solution

"If you have a problem, we're The Solution."

Malibu's Ultraverse has *The Solution*, a group of four ultrahuman freelance trouble-shooters out to solve problems for anyone with the money to hire them. They were founded on the basis of revenge, but they do have

to support themselves. Together, they fight the growing problem of ultrahumans causing worldwide crimes and disasters.

When Lela Cho's company is taken over by the criminal organization known as The Dragon Fang, Lela recruits a team of ultrapowered mercenaries to get her company back at any cost. "She's using The Solution to help her," said writer James Hudnall. Lela doesn't have unlimited funds for The Solution. She has got to have more money before she can get the thieves who stole her company. That's when she decides to go into the trouble-shooting business. "They support themselves by taking on jobs helping people who have problems with ultrahumans," said Hudnall.

The Solution consists of Outrage, a demon capable of sustaining and inflicting great damage; Tech (aka Lela Cho), a wetware enhanced woman capable of storing massive amounts of data in her head; Drop Kick, a martial arts expert enhanced by wetware and nanotech; and Shadowmage, an elf mage who uses magic as a weapon.

The Ultraverse was formed during a four day retreat in Scottsdale, AZ in October of '92. Hudnall's *Hardcase* was one of the first books in the June Ultraverse launch. "The Solution will run into Hardcase at some point," said Hudnall. "I haven't talked to the other writers about crossovers yet, but they will happen."

New Ultraverse titles are scheduled to be released each month through January of '94. "There are a relatively small number of titles in the Ultraverse," Ulm said. "The idea behind the Ultraverse is better, not bigger."

This new release from the Ultraverse is not a traditional comic book. "*The Solution* explores the gritty underbelly of the Ultraverse," said Hudnall. "It deals with sides that haven't been explored yet." Ulm said simply, "They're on the dark side of the Ultraverse. They're not at all the Fantastic Four."

Pencilled by Chris Wozniak and inked by John Lowe, *The Solution #1* is due out from the Ultraverse in September!

Marvel News

2099 Now Features... X-Men

Here it is, the premiere of 1993 – *X-Men 2099*! We've taken comicdom's most popular superhero team and thrust it into the very successful future world of the *2099* line for a series that will blast out of racks month after month. *X-Men 2099* features all-new characters, a brand new continuity, a blitzkrieg of excitement, and it all debuts with an outrageous foil-stamped cover! And, as if that isn't enough to get readers' blood rushing, *X-Men 2099 #1* includes a glimpse of the rest of the *2099* books to attract the interest of X-Men diehards who haven't taken a look at them yet.

X-Men 2099 features the impressive creative team of John Francis Moore, Ron Lim, and Adam Kubert. Moore is the writer responsible for much of *Doom 2099*'s considerable success, and comic fans everywhere associate Ron Lim with magnificent art. Lim's work will be adorned with inks by the very popular Adam (*Spirits of Vengeance*) Kubert, making *X-Men 2099 #1* one book no comic book reader can afford to miss.

Miller Returns to Daredevil

Two of the industry's hottest talents are teaming up to reveal the Man Without Fear's little-known beginnings in *Daredevil: Man Without Fear*, a 5-part limited series! Frank Miller, the writer who revolutionized the medium twelve years ago, is credited by many for setting the mood for superhero comics ever since. He's joining forces with the peerless John Romita Jr. to retell Daredevil's exciting origin with never-before-revealed details. This treasure of a book boasts foil-etching on a coated cardstock cover with embossed details and glossy *Fanfare* pages!

Joining the drama are reader's favorite characters, Elektra and Stick, making *Daredevil: Man Without Fear* a marketable commodity indeed! Certainly long-time fans will clamor for a book filled with their old friends, but newer readers are going to want to read this book, too, eager to know what all the fuss is about.

The excitement continues in *Daredevil #321*, which arrives in stores sporting a glow-in-the-dark cover! In part 2 of the gripping "Fall from Grace" storyline, Daredevil is forced to battle Hellspawn, the Daredevil Doppleganger, who

he has never before encountered, while tracking down a deadly virus that threatens the city!

For those who enjoy a gripping saga, but can only afford a few comic books a week and don't want to miss an issue, there's good news for you. *Daredevil #321* is also available without the glow-in-the-dark cover. So, fear not (get it?), one way or the other Daredevil will find a way into your home!

Avengers 30th Celebration

To commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, Marvel is publishing *Greatest Battles of the Avengers*, a 160-page trade paperback featuring reprints of the super team's most scintillating issues! This beautiful book guest stars some of Marvel's brightest stars, including the X-Men, Warlock, Thanos, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, and more.

This first-time collection reprints *Avengers #54, 55, 79, 160,* along with Annuals #7 and 10 and features the work of some of the industry's finest creators, including Chris Claremont, Michael Golden, and Jim Starlin. Claremont and Golden's story in Annual #10 marked the first appearance of the X-Men's Rogue, who is now one of the most popular members of one of comicdom's most popular superhero teams! *Avengers Annual #10* was a brisk seller when it was first published, and you can bet that the readers who missed out on it then are going to clamor for it now.

X-Anniversary Continues

The X-Men Anniversary celebration is in full swing and showing no signs of slowing down with the publication of the *X-Men Poster Magazine #2* this month! This beautiful 32-page magazine is crammed with stunning renderings of readers' favorite X-Men by some of the industry's most sought-after talent, including Greg Capullo, Larry Stroman, Richard Bennett, Brandon Peterson, Dwayne Turner, Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, John Romita, Jr., John Byrne, and Mark Texiera! X-Fans will surely treasure this beautiful color magazine for a lifetime.

X-Men #25 also ships this month, a 48-page issue with a wraparound cover and a state-of-the-art hologram featuring Gambit! No X-Men fan can afford to miss this issue, as Wolverine butts heads with none other than the Master of Magnetism himself. Without giving too much away, Wolverine will be forever changed as a result of this brutal encounter! X-scribe Fabian Nicieza is quoted as saying, "*X-Men #25* will be some pretty dangerous stuff. Somethings's going to happen in it that absolutely no-one is going to believe!" This is the pivotal issue in the X-Men Anniversary celebration.

In addition, *X-Men #9 Milestone* reprints the first clash between the Avengers and the X-Men. And don't forget about the softcover *X-Men Masterworks* entitled: *The All-New, All-Different X-Men Masterworks Volume 1.* This 128-page tpb reprints the adventures of the new X-Men in *Giant-Size X-Men #1* and *Uncanny X-Men #94-97.* It serves as a great intro for readers just coming on board. You'll also want to stock up on *Marvel Age #129* this month, which features a behind-the-scenes feature on the crossover, an Adam Hughes cover highlighting it, and a giant bound-in X-Men/Avengers poster by Liam Sharp and Mark Farmer. The poster's second half appears next month in #130!

Marvel Hero Caps

Comic fans everywhere are going to storm for Marvel Hero Caps, collectable cardboard disks emblazoned with their favorite Marvel heroes! They'll want to collect all six sets, which begin shipping in June.

Each Hero Cap set is die-cut on a standard comic-sized cardboard sheet, which is illustrated with Marvel stars and shrinkwrapped. Character and story information is provided on the back of the board. To entice collectors, one of each ten sets will include a bonus chase cap – a foil-stamped Hero Cap. At the irresistible price of $3.99, this is one collectable that customers can't afford to miss!

The sets are scheduled to ship as follows: June: X-Men Animation #1 and X-Men #1. In July: Avengers #1 and Spider-Man #1. And in August: Ghost Rider #1 and Marvels #1!

The "cap" fad began in Hawaii, took the West Coast by storm, and is now sweeping the nation! Get in on it!

Marshall News

Inside Mortar Man

Mortar Man is a wonderful super-hero comedy that has garnered praise from Diamond, Capital City, and Heroes World. Possibly, you missed it the first time. But here's your big chance to find out what Mortar Man and his pals are doing.

In September, Marshall Comics will release *Mortar Man Special Edition #1*, a new printing of *MM #1* with a centerspread of "Do It Yourself Trading Cards" for all you creative types out there! September is also the month for *Mortar Man #3*. In October, *Special Edition #2* reprints *MM #2*, so new readers can get a full set of issues!

Here's a brief rundown of what kind of nonsense goes on in Mortar Man's world:

Cary August is an explosives expert at Harbor City Research Center. He hates criminals. He hates them so much that he's adopted the guise of Mortar Man, Master of Explosives. Mortar Man likes to blow things up. He really does. Mostly it's bad guys!

What a bunch of bad guys there are! In the first two issues alone he tackles The Rotten Apple, head of the terrorist group The Apple Corps; The Globe, evil weapons expert with an army of Globots; and Digitalice, an electronics genius with a formidable (though skimpy) power-suit!

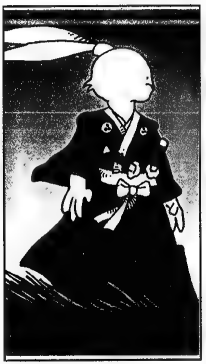
Fortunately, Mortar Man has some friends. There's Donna Micci, his extremely helpful lab assistant, who figures out that Cary August is Mortar Man pretty early in the game. Then there's Drew, Mortar Man's laid-back, junkyard-dwelling inventor friend. Finally, there's police commissioner George Washington, who's glad to have MM around, but he isn't sure just what to make of him.

Dan Duncan is the artist on *Mortar Man*. His art is, simply, outstanding. His realism gives the zaniness of the characters a "cinematic comedy" look. What's more, he makes the plentiful action sequences look just as awesome as the action scenes in any serious comic!

Plus, Marshall has a backup story, featuring the Golden Age-style adventures of the Master of Rope and his pal Slipknot. Artist Andy Fish really captures the mood of the classic days of super-heroes. This nostalgic series is also big on laughs, as our heroes get into situations even weirder than their 1940's counterparts!

Mirage News

Usagi Sells Out



That's right, the first issue of *Usagi Yojimbo* to be printed by Mirage Publishing is completely

sold out. *Usagi Yojimbo Vol. II #1* marked two major changes for the acclaimed saga of the ronin rabbit warrior: first, the move from Fantagraphics to Mirage, and second, the switch from a b&w to an all-color format. Tom Luth is providing the color on the new *Usagi Yojimbo*, which is still written and drawn by Stan Sakai. The series remains bi-monthly.

Usagi Yojimbo Vol. II #1 saw the sales jump to over twice its previous count, and readers and retailers alike seemed equally happy with the new look. Enthusiastic responses from store owners attending the Capital City, Heroes World, and Diamond trade shows indicate the *Usagi Yojimbo Vol. II #1* was an immediate hit with consumers, so much so that they couldn't keep it on the shelves!

Mirage is considering the possibility of reprinting its first issue of *Usagi Yojimbo* if the demand is high enough, but most probably will wait to collect up several issues and publish it as part of a trade paperback.

NEXT Universe: Bioneers

Genetic recombination experiments with human and animal

tissue is illegal. However, eight years ago the U.S. government quietly sent out a request for proposals for just such experiments. Finally there were two secret sanctions made. Here in the present, suspicious news-people are investigating one of these "Black Programs." They will soon get a bigger scoop than they had hoped for! Here begins the adventures of Team Dragonfighters -- A Special Operations team created as an Emergency Rescue and Extraordinary threat countermeasures force. Artificial super-humans! Fighting robots! High-tech hardware! Gear up for big adventure! The Bioneers aren't going to be a secret much longer! Story and art by A.C. Farley.

NEXT: Xenotech

Part of the brand new world of NEXT comics, *Xenotech* is high tech, high impact, super-hero adventure all the way!

It's been discovered that, on certain worlds throughout the universe, interdimensional barriers have been breached providing an access route across time and space. When these rifts open, anything can come through the gateway, and unfortunately, what comes through is usually very nasty! On Earth, the strikeforce known as Xenotech has been established as our first line of defense. Equipped with high-tech weapons and battle suits of alien design that endow them with super-human abilities, this team is all that stands between us and a mysterious and hostile universe! Written and pencilled by Michael Dooney with inks by Robert Jones.

NEXT: Stupid Heroes

The first of a new series about super-powered beings, some who have been afflicted with a rare disorder call Dementia Dominus, *Stupid Heroes #1* introduces super-powered Scott Poundstone as he engages in a wild brawl with a super-crook and his mayhem machine. SWAC trooper Alana Richardson beta-tests advanced stupidhero-wrangling gear. Craig Murphy, the fiery superhero known as Cinder, starts to lose control. And what is the project called "Tarbaby?" Story and art by Peter Laird.

Revolutionary News

Rock Comics Get Rock Support

Revolutionary Comics of San Diego has long been known for publishing unauthorized biographies of rock stars, athletes, politicians, and film figures. In its early days, between 1989 and 1991, some of the subjects they'd profiled even tried to sue them, but a First Amendment defense prevailed in each case (though they were prohibited from using licensed trademarks in a suit brought by The New Kids On The Block, the bio material was declared legally protected and safe from lawsuits). "Then a funny thing happened," comments Managing Editor Jay Allen Sanford. "CBS ran art from our Pink Floyd comic in their Shine On box set, Kiss gave us exclusive interviews for our comics on them, and all sorts of rock stars started calling up to tell us how much they liked our books! Now, they're asking us to do tour concession comics and even promotional mini-comics on them!"

The most recent rocker to endorse Revolutionary is Jimi Hendrix Experience bassist Noel Redding, who called out of the blue one day to say how much he'd enjoyed the Hendrix comic (Hard Rock #12). "I was very impressed," Redding wrote in a letter to Revolutionary after his initial call, "an excellent job done." The band Kiss is wearing the Hard Rock Comics T-shirt on the album sleeve for their new "Alive III" album (and in the new videos, magazine spreads, and tour program). What's more,

Kiss bassist Gene Simmons has officially given the maverick comic company the exclusive rights to adapt the band's sci-fi concept album The Elder into comic book form!

"You don't have to worry about Kiss interfering," says Simmons. "I find it's better to give creative people free reign in these things. The end result comes out much better." The humorous adventure/fantasy story will be by the members of Kiss, and scripted by the same team behind the Kiss Pre-History comic series; Jay Allen Sanford, Spike Steffenhagen, and Scott Pentzer.

In addition to the one-shot Elder adaptation ($2.50 B&W, September release), Revolutionary is lining up a slew of other authorized band projects with some of the biggest hard rock groups in the business, as well as some smaller up-and-coming groups. "We met with Mercyful Fate and King Diamond," Sanford notes, "and all systems are go for that project. Plus there are a pile of other projects on the plate I'll announce as things firm up. The phone's ringing off the hook with offers, and a lot of the bands want to help in actually crafting the comic itself!"

An authorized Revolutionary rock comic line!? What's next, authorized sports comics autographed by the athletes (actually, yes, but more details on the later!)?

Semple News

Calling Captain Canuck

Captain Canuck Reborn appears in stores July 1 (Canada

Day) to mark an all new chapter in the trials and tribulations of a hero first introduced in 1975. It has been 13 years since the comic book was last published and the originator, Richard Comely, has given it a complete reworking. There have been some minor changes to the costume and complete changes in the storyline.

Captain Canuck is still remembered by many comic book readers and by most Canadians and is often referred to as Canada's national super-hero. Canadian Government corporations have plans for 1994 that will even more establish that impression. Comely Communications has plans to release 2 more titles by 1994.

Darren Oaks, 32 year old father of a deaf 11 year old, belongs to a very wealthy, powerful family. Despite the wealth, Darren's life is far from being ideal. His wife is in a mental institution (or so he believes), leaving him to raise his son alone. His older brother Nathan controls the Oak family empire and is involved with a group of the world's elite in a global conspiracy. Darren has been aware of this conspiracy for some time. The thought of world economic conquest frightens him. Nathan, who is his half brother, is cold and heartless, while Darren is quite the opposite. With Oak Foundation funding, Darren sets up a town in the north as a rehab/training co-operative for the homeless and disadvantaged.

Darren exudes confidence when faced with danger thanks to his days as a kick boxing champion, but before Nathan, his confidence wanes. Using the latest in electronic surveillance devices, he is gathering evidence to prove the existence of the conspiracy. That means tapping big brother's meetings. He buys the surveillance equipment from Waller Hong, a company that is also developing a computer program that will accurately predict when and where a criminal will strike next. David Waller secretly hires a young athlete who wants to be a cop, as a vigilante, to prove his program really works. Because his M.O. involves using a high-powered paint gun to mark the criminals, the media starts calling him Splatter.

Darren tapes his brother Nathan discussing plans that will soon have French pitted against English in a bloody civil war. All this in an effort to have the Canadian government capitulate to a new international ruling body headed by Nathan.

In desperation Darren has a comic book inspired costume made up in order to conceal his identity while he exposes the conspiracy. He must rally the Canadian people against a very evil hidden agenda.

Soon, newspapers are writing about two masked marauders on the streets of Toronto. One who carries a flag and hands out leaflets, whom they call Captain Canuck, and another who paint-bombs crooks.

Toronto suddenly becomes the costumed crusader capital of the world.

Sky Comics News

Color Debut

Sky Comics is exploding onto the comic scene with three full-color titles scheduled for November and December releases. After venturing into the black and white market, Sky decided that the natural progression would be to go color. "This artwork would not be done justice in a black and white format," said Bob Hickey, Sky Comic's publisher. "In color, this stuff will literally jump off the pages and into your face. I feel confident in saying these books are as good as anything on the market ."

The first Sky color release will be *Seeker: Vengeance #1*, created and written by Joe Martin and features artwork by Willie Peppers (*Southern Knights*) and Allen Freeman (*Speed Racer*) with a beautiful back-up story pencilled by newcomer and tech specialist, Brent Trammell. Joe Martin had this to say about Brent, "This guy's attention to detail on tech stuff is amazing! He's been offered a miniseries by Milestone so I better get out of him what I can. Don't miss it."

Seeker: Vengeance #1 is about Tracy LeMaster, a top notch FBI agent, is possessed by a vengeance-seeking spirit and is compelled to go into the night and exact revenge on those who murdered her fiancee'. This will be a two-issue limited miniseries followed by another miniseries in '94, *Seeker: Faith and Corruption. Seeker: Vengeance #1* is slated for a November 10th release.

The following month will see the debut of *Blood and Roses: Future Past Tense #1*. This book, co-plotted by Bob Hickey and Brad Gorby and featuring artwork from Gorby and Hickey, follows the adventures of Christiana Blood and Tamara Rose, who have been recruited as crime fighters by the Time Lords. Brad has built quite a following with his recent work on titles like Americomics' *Femforce, Good Girl Art Quarterly* and the hit miniseries from Eclipse, *Parts Unknown. Blood and Roses* should hit the shelves late November.

Tom and Mary Bierbaum (*Legion of Super Heroes, Legionnaires*) have announced Sky Comics will be publishing their newest and possibly greatest creation also slated for December, *Dead Kid*. The story revolves around Morty Coyle, a teenager who met a tragic death but is kept alive by a talisman he wears around his neck. "It's sort of like Archie meets Dead World," said Tom. The series will be pencilled by newcomer Joe Corroney and inked by Bill Nichols. *Dead Kid* is scheduled for an early December release.

Topps News

Two New Kirby Titles

Teenagents, a fast-paced, super-hero book, focuses on four contentious teenaged super-heroes from the mysterious underground civilization of Inner City. They are the latest in a long line of dedicated, heroic teens who have been protecting the Inner City -- and our world -- for centuries. But everything changes when they become stranded on Earth, cut off from their home.

Jack Kirby's *Teenagents* is four issue comic book series developed and scripted by Kurt Busiek of *Darkman* and *Web of Spider-Man* fame. *Teenagents* is pencilled by co-developer Neil Vokes and inked by John Beatty, best known as the inker on Mike Zeck's *Captain America* and the best-selling *Secret Wars* series.

The cover for *Teenagents #1* will be pencilled by Neil Vokes and inked by Terry Austin, one of the all-time great inkers in the comic book field.

Silver Star is a "no-holds-barred, action-packed series that brings the hero of Jack Kirby's visual novel of the early '80's back to comics with a bang," according to Comics editor-in-chief Jim Salicrup.

Jack Kirby's *Silver Star* is also written by Kurt Busiek with art by James W. Fry III. Fry's recent credits include *Slapstick* and *Moon Knight* for Marvel Comics. He first became known for *The Liberty Project* and for *Star Trek*, where he worked with Busiek.

Jack Kirby -- entering his fifth decade as a major creative force in the industry -- has worked for nearly every comic book company and is co-creator of such characters as *The X-Men, Fantastic Four, Incredible Hulk*, and *Captain America*.

These new titles come on the heels of the successful launch of Kirby's *Secret City Saga* and *Satan's Six* and continue the comeback of the undisputed King of Comics.

Warp News

New Blood Summer Special

As if launching new series titles, entering into media and licensing agreements, and stepping up publishing frequency on existing series weren't enough, Warp Graphics announces even more excitement for July.

In the grand tradition of mainstream comics company annuals, *Elfquest: New Blood* will spin off a Summer Special that is independent of the regular monthly issue numbering. Readers may recall that *New Blood* burst onto the comics scene last year with a Summer Special which was, in fact, issue number one.

This year's offering is a whole new beast -- or rather, a whole new zoo. The issue is again double sized at 64 pages and packed to bursting with an elfin double-handful of varied and entertaining interpretations of the World of Two Moons.

The eight brand new stories are led off by an exquisite cover featuring the character Redlance painted, with a strong Maxfield Parish influence, by *New Blood* alumnus Dave Devries. The tales themselves include a look into the mythology of the World of Two Moons in "Eclipse of the Heart" scripted by Andy Mangels and pencilled by Brandon McKinney, with inks by *Hidden Years* regular Charles Barnett. "Heal Thy Elf" is another Tiny Toons-esque romp by artist Bill Neville and writer Terry Collins. "FurFlower's Gift" is a lovely fairy tale written by Sarah Byam and pencilled and inked by Ric Estrada, with colors by Gary Kato. "Rockshaper" tells the story of Savah's handmaiden Ahdri, and how she came into her rockshaping powers as written by Vickie Murphy and Sean Frost, with pencils by newcomer Wendi Strang.

The issue returns to the realm of the severely off-beat with "Lethargic Larry Ladhands," featuring the oddball hero created by Greg Hyland. "The Passage" sounds a more somber note as beloved character Skywise must come to grips with a deep-seated fear; the story is by Barb Kaalberg with pencils by Ken Hooper.

The *New Blood 1993 Summer Special* winds up with a whimsical tale which focuses on the sturdy tribal elder Treestump. Titled "Naming Day," the words are by Kurt and Ann Busiek, with *Hidden Years* regular Paul Abrams on pencils. The collection slides into home plate in slapstick style with a 'day in the life' look at Warp Graphics and the creative process itself in "How Not to Write Elfquest: New Blood" by gifted satirists Nat Gertler and Brian Buniak.

Warp Graphics publisher Richard Pini summed up the 1993 Summer Special project, saying, "You hear about those 'lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer.' Lazy and hazy I don't know about, but crazy we definitely are. An issue like this is the perfect mulligatawny stew for the Elfquest universe; a primordial soup of talent. It's been a year since *Elfquest: New Blood* started; it's a solid success. Who'd'a thunkit?"

Lois & Clark TV Series

Although the Lorimar television show, *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, is still in the early stages of pre-production, the main characters have been cast.

Clark Kent, as well as his alter ego Superman, will be played by newcomer Dean Cain, a former college football player for Princeton. Cain would have gone into professional football with the Buffalo Bills but a knee injury ended that career, so he turned to acting and has appeared on *Beverly Hills 90210*.

Lois Lane will be played by Teri Hatcher; Jimmy Olsen will be portrayed by Michael Landis; and editor Perry White will be played by Lane Smith, who portrayed Eddie Murphy's smooth-talking political rival in *The Distinguished Gentleman*.

Rounding out the Daily Planet staff for the show is Tracy Scoggins portrayed Cat Grant. Scoggins was a regular on ABC-TV's *Dynasty*, and has appeared in numerous medium-budget action films.

John Shea as Lex Luthor will face off against Cain's Superman in the two-hour pilot. Shea portrayed the glory-seeking, brown-nosing scientist that caused havoc for Rick Moranis in Disney's *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid* last summer.

ABC has ordered a two-hour pilot of the new show -- with six one-hour episodes immediately set to be produced if the pilot gets aired -- so a script is just now being developed. So, whether Luthor will be bald, or be the Australian Luthor II (as well as many other plot points) have yet to be determined. However, the basic premise indicates heavy doses of newsroom drama and romantic development between Lois and Clark. The show's creator, Deborah Joy LeVine, studied 250 *Superman* comics and has consulted with DC Comics editors for background information prior to writing the pilot.

The executive producers of the show are David Jacobs and Robert Butler, who have both worked on numerous television series in the past. Jacobs is also executive producer on the ABC series *Homefront*, which just wrapped up its second season. Butler was the key creator of the *Remington Steele* series a few years back, and involved in *Moonlighting* as a director and producer. Butler will be directing the pilot of *Lois & Clark*, and should bring that same romantic tension from the other series to Superman's new show.

Comics Get Fox-y

The Fox Broadcasting Network has taken strong notice of the success of the *Batman* and *X-Men* cartoons, and is bringing them back while developing some new animated series based on *The Tick*, *Spider-Man*, and even Robert Heinlein's *The Red Planet*.

Fox recently announced that both *Batman: The Animated Series* and *X-Men* will be returning in the fall with brand new episodes as part of the Fox Kids Network. *Batman: TAS* will maintain its mid-afternoon weekday time slot, and *X-Men* will remain part of the Saturday morning line-up.

But, not willing to rest on their laurels, Fox has also signed development deals -- from material from print media -- for shows to appear later in the fall season.

Both *The Tick* and Robert Heinlein's *The Red Planet* are currently being developed as "mini-series" that would air on four or five consecutive Saturdays some time in the Fall of '93. Either show may be developed into an ongoing series, depending on ratings and the studio's reaction to the mini-series. "If the creators determine there is enough material to develop into a full series, then we'll produce more episodes," said Bert Gould, Vice-President of Promotions at the Fox Kids Network.

Ben Edlund, creator of *The Tick* comic, is co-writing the scripts for the initial 5 half-hour episodes and is heavily involved in the development of the cartoon based on his work. While script production is far from complete, current plans are to incorporate as many of the characters from the comic as possible into the show, including the Tick's

sidekick Arthur, Paul the Samurai, and the Chainsaw Vigilante. The animation for *The Tick* cartoon will be by Sunbow Animation.

Fox has also ordered 65 30-minute episodes for a new *Spider-Man* cartoon that will be produced for the 1994-1995 season. Although the show is only in the development stages at this point, the series will probably be produced by New World Family Filmworks Inc., a subsidiary of New World Entertainment that is owned by the Andrews Group Incorporated (which owns 60% of Marvel), thus keeping the project essentially in house.

Also, Malibu Comics is working with Len Wein to develop *Dinosaurs For Hire* as an animated series that would probably be aired as mid-season replacement after the *X-Men* on Saturday mornings.

Debut of Quantum

According to Webster's, a quantum is one of the small parcels into which many forms of energy are subdivided, which makes the newly developed Quantum Comics an aptly named entity.

This new company's four principals -- Ross Andru, Mike Esposito, Barry Grossman, and John Winkler -- have numerous years of experience in the comic and publishing industry, man of them at Archie Comics. Now they are pouring their energy into Quantum.

Barry Grossman, Quantum's Managing Director, was art director and production manager at Archie for over 20 years. John Winkler worked for the Publishers Distributing Corp. for 30 years -- eventually becoming Distribution Manager -- and worked for both Warner Distribution and Curtis Publishing before signing on as circulation director for Archie from 1986 to 1991.

Artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito have worked for virtually every major comic publisher over the last 30 years. They have worked together on *Amazing Spider-Man, Sgt. Rock, Metal Men,* and various Archie titles including *Zen, Intergalactic Ninja.*

Also, Peter David, popular writer of *Incredible Hulk, X-Factor,* and the *Star Trek* comics -- and some of the best-selling *Star Trek* novels -- will be working as a freelancer with Andru and Esposito on projects for Quantum.

Although the company is still getting established, they are planning to produce four to six titles during the first year. Quantum will announce more details as their production schedule is finalized.

Kitchen Sink in Nation's Business

Nation's Business -- a popular monthly magazine which provides valuable information for small business owners -- profiled Kitchen Sink Press Publisher Denis Kitchen in its May 1993 issue.

"Comics for the Connoisseur," by Michael Barrier, detailed Kitchen's own cartooning career, the evolution of KSP, and KSP's diverse and unique offerings (most notably, the *Li'l Abner* reprint volumes).

In the article, Kitchen commented on the collector mentality that has continued to dominate the marketplace: "We've got to get back to the fundamental approach, which is to say that you buy a comic book to read it, and not to put it in a plastic bag and stash it away."

Cartoon Art at Comicfest

The International Museum of Cartoon Art, which is dedicated to collecting, displaying, and interpreting the most important works of cartoon art, will exhibit at Comicfest '93, the nation's largest comics and collectibles entertainment event taking place in Philadelphia in October.

The Museum, founded by *Beetle Bailey* creator Mort Walker, features a collection including more than 100,000 original drawings, 10,000 books, and hundreds of hours of animated film and videotape. Previously located in metropolitan New York, the International Museum of Cartoon Art's new home is slated for 1994 completion in Boca Raton, Florida.

"Sometimes comic strips are forgotten, or taken for granted, when we talk about comic book art," said Comicfest promoter David Greenhill. "This artform is very unique -- it runs the gamut from comic strips in newspapers and editorial cartoons to magazine cartoons and greeting cards. It's a very important part of the comics family and we're thrilled to have Mr. Walker and the International Museum of Cartoon Art join us."

"Cartoons have an impact on the daily lives of millions, no only entertaining and amusing them, but also providing powerful social, historic, and political commentary," said Walker. "Cartoons often create a very nostalgic feeling in people. I appreciate the effort Comicfest

is making to include cartoon art and other areas related to comic books. We all have a great deal to offer."

Along with showcasing a large permanent collection of historic and contemporary works, and hosting four major exhibitions each year, the Museum will focus on educational programs including tours and traveling exhibits, classes, and workshops geared for students and teachers, lectures and film series, seminars, and workshops and theatrical productions. Walker expects upwards of 500,000 visitors each year to enjoy the Museum.

Comicfest '93, the largest comics and collectibles event in the United States, expects to attract an estimated 70,000 visitors with the help of an extensive advertising and public relations campaign. In addition to offering recent and classic comic books, Comicfest '93 will feature a variety of exhibits, events, and activities that will appeal to science fiction and animation fans, trading card collectors, and video game enthusiasts, among others.

Heartbreaker Hooks Up With Image

Heartbreaker Hobbies announces the commencement and continual negotiation with many of the creators from Image Comics to develop, produce, and market a series of limited edition pewter sculptures based on various characters from the Image universe.

"Image Comics, like Heartbreaker is only in their second year of business, yet they've experienced unprecedented meteoric success from their inception. By assembling the best talent in the comic industry, they've created the comic industry's version of the U.S. Olympic Basketball Dream Team," stated Bob Watts, president of Heartbreaker.

The first issue in this series will be Dale Keown's Pitt, scheduled for release in September. Subsequent months should see, as negotiations progress, the release of sculptures depicting Marc Silvestri's Cyberforce, While Portacio's Wetworks, Larry Stroman and Todd Johnson's Tribe, Al Gordon and Jerry Ordway's Wildstar, and Sam Kieth's The Maxx. Negotiations are continuing with most of the remaining Image creators, and the goal is to produce sculptures of all the major characters in the Image universe.

Each pewter sculpture will be hand poured and hand finished to achieve the most elegant finish possible. This will be a limited edition series with no issue exceeding 9,999 pieces. When an issue attains its pre-determined limit, the molds will be destroyed and the issue retired.

To further promote this series, Heartbreaker is planning to have the sculptures presented in the piece's corresponding comic, in association with Bowe & Board of Scotsdale, AZ, include a trading card with each issue that will be limited to the amount of sculptures produced, and attend or be represented at various comic shows across the country.

COMICS NOW

by Jerry Smith

The quality of Marvel's core titles has been skyrocketing downward for years. I grew up with the priceless exploits of heroes such as the *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Captain America*, and *Iron Man*. Now these books are so bad they might as well stop publishing them. I regard each of these books with particular sadness, but I have a copy of *Iron Man* in front of me, so I might as well start with that one.

Iron Man #294, "Orbital Resonance," is a good example of the apathy Marvel feels toward most of its non-grim-and-gritty characters these days. I'm sure the artistic team is trying their best, but the result is totally uninteresting. The crippled Tony Stark (a plotline dragged out far too long--is he crippled or not?) senses something on a spacestation somewhere (I can't recall much of what happened; shows the massive impact of the story). He flys up to check it out. A bunch of germs or something turn into yet another monster based on the monster in the Alien films (Can't these people sue? Oh, that's right, the Alien people got the idea from Chris Claremont). Anyway, I'm not sure what happened next, but it wasn't original or exciting.

There are a lot of problems with this book. First of all, Iron Man's armor is ugly. It's choppy and bulky. Marvel should bring back the beautiful streamlined armor Bob Layton drew so well. Marvel never changes anything, it's funny that the one thing they do change worked fine as it was.

Secondly, Tony Stark has no personality. He's an emotionless drone, driven by nothing. He has no motivation, no hook to make us like him or hate him. Sure, he was a selfish Playboy jerk in the Michelinie/Layton days, but everyone knew where he stood. Personally, I liked him anyway back then.

I have collected this book all my life; it's the only '60s Marvel title of which I have every issue. Even though the book is on issue #294, I don't think I'll be sticking around 'til anniversary issue #300. It's not worth the $7.50 it will take to get there. As Ross Perot would say, "That's sad."

The "Bloodlines" storyline running through DC's annuals this summer is decent reading. Nothing spectacular, but if you only buy annuals about the characters you regularly read, like I do,

they're not bad. I find these compulsory annual crossovers tiring and unnecessary, but then somebody must be buying them, or the annoying practice of uniting annual storylines with some ridiculous premise would stop.

The "Bloodlines" tie-in up for review is *Superman Annual* #5. Since we're still temporarily in the "Reign of the Supermen" mode, this story deals with the cyborg Superman. You know, the one who is half-man, half-machine, and has a steel skull for most of his head even though Doomsday didn't rip Superman's face off? The one endorsed by President Clinton (By the way, that endorsement was revoked soon after it was given. Surprise, huh?)? That's the one.

All of DC's annuals this year also introduce new characters, this one is female hero called Myriad. I'll accept a lot of things in comics: beings who fly, men who can lift buildings, women who turn invisible, artists who can't write becoming millionare celebrities--but one thing I can't ac-

cept is someone coming back from the dead. Don't get me wrong, everyone from the Ancient One to Peter Parker's parents have come back from the dead. I don't mean comic book death, where death is explained to be some miraculous Cosmic mistake, i.e. "they weren't really dead," etc. I mean that when a character with no superpowers is murdered, stops breathing, and is thrown into a garbage heap and left there for weeks, dead, that character is dead.

This is what happens in *Superman Annual #5*. It seems the evil Lex Luthor (was there ever any other kind?) killed his karate instructor for getting in a few too many kicks at his expense. He threw her body into a dumpster and laughed at getting away with murder. Well, the aliens from "Bloodlines" happen to feast on her dead body fluids in the garbage dump, and, guess what? Not only does she come back to life, but she now has some kind of memory-stealing superpowers.

I'm sorry, but dead is dead. Myriad wasn't an alien from Krypton with powers far beyond those of mortal men. She didn't have a healing factor. She wasn't in a pod in New York harbor while her doppleganger was wasted. This was a human karate instructor who was brutally murdered and tossed into a garbage dump. Aliens or no, people like this do not come back to life.

It was nice to see the continuing characterization of the cyborg Superman, and to see Lex Luthor sweat when he realized who Myriad was, but this fantastic premise was too much for me to accept. Even in comics.

One of the best books of the month is Erik Larsen's The *Savage Dragon* #1. Number one of the ongoing series, that is. Apparently some story material has been published between the miniseries and this first issue in the *Savage Dragon trade paperback*, it would be helpful to read that before reading this. I think it's a little unfair to ask fans to pay $9.95 for a trade paperback of mostly reprinted material to get the whole Savage Dragon story, but that's the way things go.

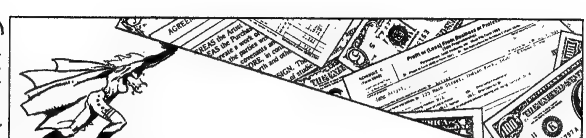
I'll say one thing for this book, Erik Larsen loves what he is doing, and he's taking us along for the ride. Every page is written, drawn, inked, and colored with love and care for the Dragon and his world. When the Dragon is injured, his wounds bleed and he has to take time to heal. He even wears bandages! What other Image character actually wears band-aids when he's hurt?

This book is a lot of fun, from the fight scenes to the characters to the subplot of Dragon's best friend, a cop, being blackmailed to keep him out of the biggest cases. Oh, and the scene of the Dragon breathing fire is a classic. Check this one out, it's a real blast.

PREVIEW

STYGMATA

by John Migliore and Raff Ienco
Published by Entity Comics



Getting Into The BUSINESS Of Comics

by Lurene Haines

Part 6: Approaching Potential Employers:
Step Four - Feedback and Critiques

In last month's column I talked about the personal interview and how it can affect your new comics business career. This month I'm going to focus on one of the most important aspect of approaching potential employers: getting, and making use of, feedback and critiques.

First, let's look at what is meant by 'feedback' and 'critique'. Technically, they mean the same thing - obtaining opinions and comments on your work from industry professionals, including other creators, publishers and editors. However, feedback is generally considered a more informal response than a critique. Feedback comes in many situations, but most commonly when you show your work to others, on a casual basis. A critique is generally a more structured feedback session, sometimes with comments provided in note form.

Do I Really Need The Criticism?

Many newcomers are afraid to be criticized. That's not an unreasonable fear, it's just non-constructive. Basically, no matter how long you've worked, or how popular you are, it helps you as a professional to have feedback from your peers and idols.

And absolutely *nobody* is too good to be critiqued.

Now, many creators might say that they are 'good' enough to no longer need that professional feedback. But those are the same creators who will never grow or improve as a talent. Whether you are an artist or a writer, you should constantly be striving to learn and grow and improve. There is no such thing as 'achieving perfection'. Perfection is a fleeting, momentary state of satisfaction - you should find yourself motivated by your successes to reach further and strive harder to attain an even finer degree of accomplishment. This perpetual state of searching and improving will serve to make you a talent worth watching throughout your career.

Sure, nobody likes to be criticized. Sometimes it can be very painful to sit still while someone picks apart your work of love. But self-confidence is the key here. Always remember that you are a growing talent, that you should strive to improve and hone your professional skills. Listen to what is said about your work, and turn it to your advantage. And keep one thing in mind at all times. If the critique is done properly, you shouldn't feel as though your work (or you) has been berated. You should be getting comments about the strengths and weaknesses of your work. And you should be able to determine what's worth remembering and what you should simply blow off as petty.

So How Do I Get Critiqued?

There are many ways to obtain a critique of your work. Through this series, we've looked at a variety of ways to get your work looked at; attending conventions, sending samples by mail, and making a personal interview appointment. Each of these avenues has it's pros and cons, but all are valuable as they represent an opportunity to get constructive criticism on your work.

Conventions

At many conventions publishers schedule *portfolio reviews*, where a more formalized critique of a number of aspiring artists will occur. Sometimes these are done in an organized appointment fashion, and sometimes it's a big line, where it's first to

come-first to be served. Regardless of the format, take advantage of these reviews. From the feedback these publishers and editors give you, you will be able to further improve and tailor your work to better suit that company's requirements, and thusly improve your chances of being hired.

Some conventions also schedule readings. These vary from show to show, but can be composed of established writers reading their own works, or occasionally are set up for new writers to read excerpts of their own work for interested editors and publishers. If you have the opportunity to read at a convention, don't miss out. Not only will this enable you to acquire valuable feedback you can use to improve or hone your writing skills, but reading your work aloud will help you get a feel for the flow of your storytelling ability. This is also a useful technique to use at home.

In addition to portfolio reviews and readings, conventions offer you the opportunity to show your work to other creators. Pay attention to the comments they make - even when they're painful - and file the information away for later reference. Always be gracious when getting a critique, regardless of whether you liked what you heard. Keep in mind, that the creator has taken time from their work (and a convention is work for a professional!) to give you some feedback on how you're doing. Their opinions may not always seem on target to you, but they took the time to do you the favor of looking at your work, so don't forget to voice your appreciation with thanks.

Similarly, use the convention event as an opportunity to take your work around to the publisher's booths. If they are willing to look at your work on the spot, take advantage of the opportunity. Sometimes, outside the time-pressure of a portfolio review, they can provide you with a more detailed and expansive critique.

Mail Samples

As we have discussed in the past, sending samples of your work by mail to prospective employers can also be helpful in refining your abilities. Most publishers, on receipt of samples with a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE), will take the time to give you a fair critique. Sometimes it can even lead to work! Pay attention to what feedback you are given, and make the appropriate adjustments to your work. Essentially, that publisher/editor is providing you with the keys necessary to eventually obtain work with their company. Put that information to good use, and you may find yourself gainfully employed.

Responses to submissions by mail take a variety of forms. They can be a quick note, a full and detailed letter, and as often is the case for busy publishers - a form response.

A form response is a pre-printed card or letter with a variety of replies. The editor/publisher checks off the appropriate items in response to your submission. But don't be deterred! A form response doesn't mean your work didn't merit a 'real' critique. Never take the response personally. ALWAYS, ALWAYS remember - this is a *business*. It's just business, not a personal attack. The most likely reason for as form response, is that the target publisher/editor is swamped with submissions, and deluged with work. Be happy when you get any response. There will be many occasions where it will take multiple submissions before you hear a peep out of them!

Finally, don't let a form response - even if it's less than positive - deter you from future submissions to this company. Unless they state outright that they ". . . are not accepting submissions at this time," then you should send updated samples periodically, and utilize any feedback they (or anyone else) provide to tailor your samples to their individual needs.

Personal Interviews

If you are fortunate enough to be able to score a personal interview with a prospective employer, take full advantage of this golden opportunity. Even if it becomes clear in the course of the interview that you won't be hired at that time, pay full attention to everything your interviewer has to say about your work.

If you have a small recorder, ask permission to tape their feedback, so you can review it later. You can also make notes so you don't forget what is said about your work.

Most importantly, be gracious. You have taken up a portion of the interviewers work day. They are providing you with the chance to demonstrate, through your work, if your skills

Sample Of A Form Response (*Courtesy Of Caliber Press*)

Dear Creator/Talent

Please excuse this generic form that covers your submission but it is the only way we can handle the volume of submissions received. Please look over the checklist and see which are applies to you. In any case, we do appreciate you taking the time to send us your submission and thank you for thinking of us. If your work is not accepted by us at this time, we hope that you continue to work at your craft and wish you the best of luck in this often difficult "to break in" medium.

_____Yes, we are interested in your work, please turn over and fill out the areas on the reverse side of this sheet.

_____No, sorry we are not interested in this submission at this time for the following reason(s):

____Not suitable for us as far as the type of material we want to produce.

____Generally just lacking in a quality level to consider for publication.

WRITERS:

_____The story is something that is working on a level of audience that we are not actively seeking, ____or within a genre we have no interest in.

_____The characters in the story are lacking motivational factors to bring out their actions in the story.

____ The dialogue needs additional work. ____ Plot needs additional work.

____ Too much implausibility in story. ____ Story lacks structure.

ARTISTS:

_____ The samples sent don't show us enough to give an example of your work

____ no/too few continuity pages ____ lacking enough samples

_____ The samples generally indicate an artistic level not ready for publication

_____ Areas where we feel you need improvement:

____anatomy ____faces ____architecture ____perspective

____layouts ____ storytelling ____camera angles

_____ Please send us some more samples, we'd like to see more soon.

_____ Practice some more and give us another try later.

are refined enough for their company to use. Don't be cocky, don't be rude. Behave exactly how *you* would want a prospective employee to behave if it was *you* doing the hiring; polite, honest, and attentive.

Finally, if your interview ends without the possibility of gaining employ at that time, check with your interviewer to see how long you must wait before you can come back for another appointment. Indicate that you intend to apply the feedback they have provided, and suggest a return appointment a month or so down the road. If they are amenable, this can provide you with the opportunity to apply what you've learned, and better your chances at working with this company.

The Anatomy Of A Critique

Wherever you end up getting your critique, and regardless of who does the critique, it will have the same basic characteristics. People will look over your samples, and tell you what they think. However, it is at this point that there can be significant variations in what makes up the critique.

Depending on who is doing the critique (a fellow creator, an established professional, a potential employer, or your Mom), the time constraints under which it is done (a crowded convention hall, a quiet office, or your friend's house), and the skill level of the critique-giver (PhD in Fine Arts, a professional with 20+ years experience, your kid sister who has created her own comic book series for her friends, or your bored friend who's *trying* to watch the *Beavis and Butthead* show) the critique is going to have a great deal of variation. So here are some points to remember:

- a good critique talks about both your strengths and weaknesses
- a good critique looks at improvement in your work over time (ie., older samples versus newer work)
- a good critique never dwells on how completely 'amazing!' you are, or how completely 'awful!' you are. That's getting personal, not objective. There should always be a balance, since your work will have good and bad points
- a good critique looks at a reasonable amount of your work - not just one page, and not the three forty-page volumes you dragged along with you!
- a good critique analyzes not just the mechanics of your work, but the overall effect - The Big Picture. For artists, it's not just the actual pencils/inks/colors, but how you put it together as a page of storytelling-with-images. For writers, it's not just whether you can create a really cool character concept, but if you know how to tell a real story with that character (i.e., beginning-middle-end, conflict, resolution, excitement, action, humor, plausibility, realistic dialogueing, etc.)
- a good critique involves questions and verbal interaction with you. The person doing your critique should try to find out information about your background, experience, and interests. This information will help them provide you with useful and constructive advice
- a good critique considers your feelings, without babying you. You should never be treated unfairly, or rudely. If they don't like your work, there are many ways of saying so that are fair and tough, but considerate. On the other hand, you shouldn't take personal offense if they seem overly blunt. Just keep in mind, it's your work they're criticizing, not you as a person.

Critique Etiquette

Now that you've finally talked someone into looking at your work, you must remember your own behavior is important. Most professionals who look at your work are providing you a valuable service free of charge. For that reason alone, you should be grateful. Show your appreciation by being polite and attentive to what they say. And always thank them for their time, regardless of whether you agree with what they've said.

As important as it is for a person critiquing your work to abide by certain guidelines, it's equally important for you to follow a certain etiquette or behavior. There are plenty of things to remember to do and not to do, but if you follow the standard behavior when being interviewed for a new job, you won't go wrong. In the meantime, here are some points you should make a note of:

- close friends and family have a hard time being completely objective and honest. After all, they *love* you. They think you're great. Try to temper that unabashed adoration with more objective critiques.
- always listen carefully to what the person critiquing your work has to say
- don't interrupt to make explanations or excuses for parts of your work they might criticize
- don't be demanding, rude, flippant or cocky. It's fine to be self-confident, but there's a thin line between confidence and arrogance.
- DON'T, DON'T, DON'T, compare your work to anyone elses - whether as a put-down on them *or* yourself. The person looking at your work doesn't care if you think you draw as good, better, or worse than anyone else. They'll tell *you* if they think it's worth mentioning.
- NEVER put-down or criticize the work of the person/company critiquing you, whether you believe your constructive input is valuable or not. Write them a letter some other time. Just now, they didn't come to *you* for feedback, you came to *them*.
- at conventions, don't corner a professional to "take a quick look" at your work, when they're bogged down with convention business or talking with fans. Especially if you want a critique - that should never be "just a quick look." Wait your turn and be polite
- don't just show up at a publisher's/editor's office unannounced and expect them to take time out of their busy, planned, work day to look at your samples. Prove you're a professional and make an appointment.
- when making mail submissions, ALWAYS include an SASE if you expect a response. Publishers receive literally hundreds of unsolicited submissions every week. This represents hundreds of dollars in postage - a prohibitive cost for any business. Many are unable to respond with more than a form letter, but it's a guarantee that without an enclosed SASE, you won't be hearing from them at all.
- don't argue with the person critiquing your work. Sure, they may not understand what you've been trying to achieve with your work. Sure, they may seem somewhat harsh in their comments. But always keep in mind; you went to them to ask their opinion. Now keep quiet and listen to what they say. You can always ignore their comments and advice later, just don't argue with them while they're talking to you.

Applying Critiques and Feedback

Applying what you've been told is the most important aspect of having your work critiqued. It's al well and good to drag your samples from convention to publisher to the post office, but if all you do is show the same stuff over and over again, without listening to the advice your given or applying the feedback you get, then you will never improve as a creator and your chances of becoming gainfully employed in the comic industry are very slim.

Granted, it can be painful to have your work criticized. But listen carefully to the comments you get. If you hear a repeating theme in the feedback (eg. "Well, your drawin skills are strong, but you use to many front on shots. Vary your 'camera angles' more.), then there's probably a good chance that it is a weakness you need to work on. Possibly one that will prevent you from getting work in the business.

On the other hand, if a single person delivers a critical, and seemingly unwarranted, blow to your ego, consider carefully what they said, who said it, and the circumstances in which it was said. (eg. You meet another newcomer at a convention, and when they look at your work they criticize your anatomy as being "too artsy," in a very sarcastic manner.) People are only human. Sometimes they hide their own insecurities by lashing out at others. If you are shocked by a particularly vicious attack on your work, step back and take another look at the situation. If you still can't understand the motivation behind the 'attack', then ignore it, move on, and get a second opinion.

If, after a series of critiques, some consistent weaknesses in your work are pointed out, then take that information home and consider it. Carefully look through your work, and compare what you've been told to change to how your work looks. You will begin to see the places where you should change and

ProFiles

Professional: Gary Reed, Publisher of Caliber Press
Credits Include: Co-creator, co-writer, *Baker Street*; writer, *Mechanoids*
Current Projects: As publisher, Gary Reed is responsible for: *Realm of the Dead, Roadkill:A Deadworld Chronicle*; *Synergy*; *Deadworld*; *Realm*; *Negative Burn*; *Joel Sinn*.
Question: When you critique a newcomer's work, what are some of the things you focus on and what type of behavior or etiquette do you expect?

As far as artwork goes, assuming a basic level of competency such as anatomy and drawing skills, you're basically looking for how they compose the story. How are their various storytelling aspects? Are they changing the camera angles? Are they moving the characters around in a logical, coherent fashion as opposed to 'jagged cuts', where they're jumping from behind to the front of the character? There's a technique called 'the 180-degree turn.' Every step you move the character should be going in that flow of 180-degrees. So basically, just how the storytelling and how the character situations move. You don't want to have the flow of the story interrupted by these jarring shots, which may look good - make really great pin-ups - but they don't help the story along. Also, one thing you don't want to see all the time are these straight-on, waist-high frontal shots, which you see from a lot of new people.

Writing is a lot harder. For one, it takes a lot longer to tell if somebody's good. And a lot of times, I think that in art you can sometimes get away with telling one story, or type of story, really well. That can also be true in writing, where they can handle one type of situation really well. Then you have to look at how they handle the transition, how they handle the dialogue. I can't believe how incredibly bad a lot of comic dialogue is! You just have to look at all the same components you have to look at in a story, first, without the artwork. You have to look at how the story is structured and how it's put together.

One thing that irks me more than anything else is when somebody comes up and asks for a critique, and even though you try to make it clear that you're just one person and that it's your personal viewpoint of their art or story, they start arguing with me. If I say 'Well, I don't like the way this is drawn,' I don't like it when they start arguing with me or trying to justify the way that it's drawn.

Basically, it just comes down to 'I don't like it.' If I don't think it works, it doesn't matter what reason there is behind doing it that way. Whether the agree or disagree, this is my opinion, and I don't care if they totally disregard it. I just don't want to spend 15 or 20 minutes arguing over a small point. This can influence whether they're hired or not, but Caliber Press is a bit different, in that we do creator-owned projects, and take the package complete, warts and all. But I can see how if would affect a lot of other publishers who are looking for a specific style of art or type of artist. If they're going to argue over a small point like this, then what's going to happen if they're hired and the editor has to go in ask for a change? If the artist is going to balk and fight them every step of the way, it's not worth the editors time.

Artwork from Caliber Press'
Roadkill: A Chronicle of the Deadworld

improve your work. Using this feedback, check out some books at the library or your local college that can provide you with instruction and guidance on how to execute the recommended changes.

And Practice. Practice, Practice, Practice. Almost nobody starts out proficient at anything they try for the very first time. If you play a musical instrument, did you start out able to play a concerto the first time out? Pretty unlikely. If you're any good, it most likely took you long months and years of practice to get there. The same thing goes for your craft, be it writing or art. You can only hone your skills by practicing.

It also helps to search out advice and instruction from experts; other professionals in the field, teachers and publishers. Strive to continually improve your skills through every possible avenue, and it will serve to make you a better professional.

Wrapping It Up

As you can see, constructive criticism from a formal critique can help you as a talent, and as an aspiring comic professional. To shy away from this valuable industry 'service' is to stunt your growth creatively, and to possibly miss out on the clues a publisher can give you for gaining employ with their company.

It's also important to remember that there are many places to have your work critiqued, including conventions, through mail samples and in personal interviews. Take advantage of any and all these avenues. Aim to have as many professionals look at your work as you can. Each will bring their own expertise and experience to the critique, and can provide you with valuable insight in improving your creative skills.

Always keep in mind that a good critique has many characteristics, but that regardless of the type of critique you receive, good etiquette as the recipient is crucial.

Whatever it takes, strive to grow as a creator. Use feedback from critiques, practice, get good advice and instruction - these will all serve to improve your skills. By making the effort to apply feedback, you will demonstrate to a potential employer your ability to work as a team member and a reliable employee. And by using a critique to your benefit, you will be taking another giant step toward Getting Into The Business Of Comics.

Glossary Of Terms

critique - a structured or more formal situation where you obtain opinions and comments on your work from industry professionals, including other creators, publishers and editors

feedback - the information you get during a critique
form response - a pre-printed card or letter with a variety of replies to a mail submission
portfolio review - generally held at a convention, though occasionally scheduled by major publishers at their offices, this is a more formalized critique of a number of aspiring artists. Sometimes these are done in an organized appointment fashion, and sometimes it's simply a big line, where it's first come-first served
reading - where established or newcomer writers read excerpts of their written work to an audience of peers and/or the public
SASE - self-addressed, stamped envelope that should accompany every mail submission you send to a publisher.
unsolicited submissions - mail submissions sent to a publisher, without their invitation, with the hopes you will be considered for future work.

If you have questions about topics covered in this column, please feel free to write. I will try to address your questions in the column or by a personal note. Send your letters to **Lurene Haines, c/o Arena Magazine, 264 main St., Florence, KY 41042.**

A Conversation With ...Neil Gaiman

by Paul H. Birch

The following feature is collected from two interviews conducted with the award-winning writer in 1990 and 1992.

"I got the entire story when I was in New York," reflected Neil Gaiman on *Death: The High Cost of Living*, published under DC's new Vertigo imprint. "I was out a few years back promoting *Good Omens* (the novel) with Terry Pratchett, and we were walking down an area of Broadway where people were selling things. There was a guy with a blanket on the ground selling ankhs, and all of a sudden I had a complete story in my head. I turned round to Terry Pratchett and said 'I think I'm going to do a story with Death, and I'm going to call it *The High Cost of Living*, and he said 'What a rotten title!'". Obviously the people at DC didn't think so, and neither has the buying public.

That initial charismatic charm of the character was as much a surprise to Neil as *The Sandman* #8's readers.

"I knew she was going to be young and perky before I started. I didn't know quite how much until she turned up and started talking about Mary Poppins of all things!

"I knew that Sandman being Death's younger brother, everyone was going to get this vision of a sort of Terry Pratchett Death; and they'd all assume Death was male as well. That's the way people are -- a sort of inbuilt sexism. The fact that she was so full of life and at ease with herself in what she did was something that started to evolve as I began writing. She's come to terms with it; it's a job, she doesn't see why people make such a fuss of it."

Her visual appearance was a natural progression from that of the Sandman's.

"I thought 'I'll dress him in a way I can believe in: basic black. What I want him to look like is Barry Smith's *Conan* with anorexia nervosa, and I want his hair all over the place.' That was basically how we evolved.

"Making Death a female equivalent was easy. When you take that look and turn it into a female: it's Goth (alternative rock fans). When I lived in London I used to see these female Goths on the tube at night, but I'd never see any above ground. I used to wonder where they came from, and if they just lived on the tube.

"It's not necessarily a political or fashion statement, more an effort to create a character who would look essentially believable whilst having an otherworldly quality."

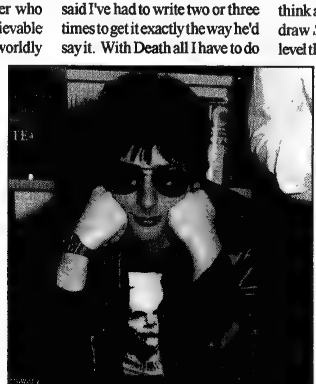
Alongside the new, *Death* features familiar characters from *The Sandman*.

"There's a lot of characters, lots of walking around, lots of fun dialogue, lots of Death being cute and her getting to try on hats!" The writer laughed before adding, "There is the possibility that she isn't Death at all. She may just be a fifteen year old girl called Didi whose entire family was killed some months earlier and has gone a little bit mad.

"He's a wonderful artist and a delight to work with. He draws quite possibly the best women in comics and has a wonderful design sense," he says of *Death*'s pencil artist, Chris Bachalo. "Added to which we have Mark Buckingham on inks. It's one of those really interesting occasions where the mix of the two artists produces a third. It kind of reminds me of a punk-styled Brian Bolland.

"It affects *Sandman* in so far as people who are interested in finding out what has happened to Hazel and Foxglove, or Mad Hettie will enjoy it. They may learn a few things about the Endless, and a few things about Death, but the things they'll learn are mainly things that Sandman doesn't know. There is also a strange little tie-in with *Books of Magic*.

As for further *Death* series he says, "It'll have to be when I next get an idea for a story. It is not actually less work, but writing Death herself as a character is very easy. Writing Sandman is very hard. Anything he's ever said I've had to write two or three times to get it exactly the way he'd say it. With Death all I have to do is think of a straight line and she's there with the next line. It's great fun because I feel as if I'm not having to work as hard!



"I think that having done Death my tendency would be to want to go off and do some more with The Endless." Such individual character books could come in the form of either mini-series or one-shots.

After the double-sized *Sandman #50* including Craig Russell on an Arabian Knights story of which Neil comments, "It's quite incredible, one of the nicest pieces from Craig I've seen." Short stories will again be in favour until the last big storyline starting around #55, followed by a possible three issue series. "Then there'll be Charles Vess on *The Tempest* and that'll be that!

"People you've never heard of before, alongside the occasional superstar," he says of artists on those preceding issues. "I keep hearing from people that they think artists would be lining up to draw *Sandman*, and yes, on one level they are, but you'd be amazed at how many artists can't actually draw people just sitting around and talking. You get these artists and they send me these wonderful dynamic things of people hitting other people through buildings, and I say 'Here's a *Sandman* script, let me see how you do with this' and they have a lot of trouble."

However, possible artists include Alec Stevens, Guy Davis, and Michael Zulli.

"I came up with another story for Hob from *Sandman #13* which Michael drew, and he'd said if I came up with another story with Hob in it and offered it to another artist, he would pack his cut-throat razor collection and head off to find me and teach me not to do it again."

Explaining his intentions with *Sandman* has not always been easy to those accustomed to comic books concluding only because of sales.

"*Sandman* is a story. It begins in #1 and ends somewhere [in the '70s]. During that time, as with all stories, or real stories, the characters change. Part of the story is about why and how he

changes, and what effect events have on him, as much as he has on events.

"Part of the joy is, I can bring him off-stage, center-stage; he can be the protagonist, then I can move him and he's almost a background character. I don't know if an air of mystery is important to the Sandman, but definitely a detachment. People say, 'What is *Sandman*?' I say it's a contemporary mythological fantasy; it doesn't mean anything, but it sounds good and I like it! Part of the fun with *Sandman* is trying to create a mythic structure that -- this sounds terribly pseudo -- relates to the 20th century; to what we're seeing now. In the end you can almost comment on it from a mythical viewpoint."

Commenting on the Vertigo imprint he said: "*Sandman*'s now in a position where, the last orders I heard, it sells about three times as much as anything else on the Vertigo line coming out currently, and it'd be nice to direct anyone who's into *Sandman* towards this other stuff which they might also like. And I hope it gives Karen Berger more leverage, so it essentially doesn't confuse people so much by drawing some kind of line between us and the *Superman* titles. "We're always talking about pushing comics towards adults and mature readers, and I think Vertigo is DC's way of putting some money into it and paying more than lip service."

With Steve Bissette intending to use artwork completed and paid for on the final issues of *Taboo*, Neil and Michael Zulli are negotiating with various mainstream book publishers to find a new home for *Sweeney Todd*.

"The nice thing about being in *Taboo* is that we had a completely variable number of pages. If I wanted to ring Steve up and say the next one was going to be sixty-five pages, he'd say fine, and if the next chapter was four pages, that'd be fine. I can't think of anywhere else where we'd have the same commitment."

In December '86 Alan Moore asked a nobody, as far as the comics business was concerned, to take over writing *Miracleman*.

"Him coming to me and asking me to write *Miracleman* was the biggest vote of confidence I'd had in my career. It was what kept me going for the next two years. On that level it was really important to me. The trouble being, by the time Alan had finished Book 3, 3 1/2 years later, I'd moved on, and which it's an effort to go in there fresh again, which I've been doing, and I'm very pleased." The title slowed to a snail's pace for business reasons between the creators and Eclipse, all of which seem to have been settled with Gaiman now hoping to write scripts on a bi-monthly basis.

"I still want to stay with *Miracleman* until we finish the story that Mark (Buckingham) and I started."

Back in 1990, he revealed a book that had been gestating for 2 1/2 years even then, and featuring Batman, with the intention of it being drawn by Simon Bisley.

"What it should be is probably the only action-adventure that I've ever written. There'll be lots of people jumping around and hitting each other. It'll be the kind of book I'd love to have read when I was 12-14. Everyone should do one long underwear book, this is mine, called *The Night Circus*.

His most recent outing into superherodom was scripting *Spawn #9* for Todd McFarlane, wherein, "Spawn meets a young lady called Angela who will kill him. All in readiness for *Spawn #10* when he meets Cerebus!"

As if all this wasn't enough, *Signal to Noise*, with illustrator Dave McKean, will be given a US release soon, and the two will collaborate again on *Mr. Punch*, not due out until the end of the year. The concept album he's working on for/and with Alice Cooper may also give birth to a comic around Halloween, and British audiences should be switching their TV's on to BBC2 in 18 months time for a series written for comedian/actor Lenny Henry's Crucial Films, with working titles of both *Neverwhere* and *The Underside*. "It's about another London underneath London." One wonders if he took time off for Christmas!

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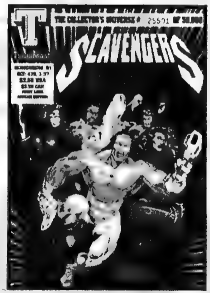

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A Conversation With...

JOHN OSTRANDER

By
Robert J. Sodaro

Bob: *I understand you're taking part in the Valiant/ Imagecross-over.*

John: Yes, I am. Each of the Valiant sections is going to comprise several chapters. In the second of the two Valiant books I have one of the chapters, it's about 10 pages worth, and because of the storyline, the Unity storyline never occurred and Magnus never went into the future. So what we have to do is we sort of borrow the old Max Headroom "20 minutes into the future" sort of thing. An adult Magnus, but one who has never fought robots, will be confronting or teaming up, however it works up, with a character Battlestone from the Image Brigade group.

Bob: *Without giving away specific plot elements, what's the overall storyline?*

John: Essentially, what happens is the Image character Void, and one of the spin off Solar characters, the Solar who appeared in Magnus's time, the future Solar, encounters Void somehow. There must be a space drift or something like that, and they fall in love. This love that they share, suddenly merges the two universes into a single one, in which certain things did or did not happen. As a result, the future does not exist. In fact, time is sort of retroactively ceasing to be. One of the things that we'll discover in my Magnus section is that things are sort of de-creating, coming back down the time line. It will be up to the amalgamation of both Image and Valiant characters to try and avert this situation.

Bob: *So I take it that, apart from the Valiant/Image cross-over, none of this has any permanent effect on the regular titles.*

John: It doesn't affect the regular universes other that-- yes it does--because for a brief time the two universes are merged. By the end of it they won't be merged anymore. Everyone will go back.

Bob: *Will the characters remember that this stuff happened?*

John: Outside of someone like the Geomancer and Lord M. or Void, I doubt if they would have that awareness, but that's not gospel, that's just my own speculation

Bob: *So your chapter deals with...?*

John: With Magnus about 20 years up from now. Encountering the character Battlestone, as time comes unraveled, all about them.

Bob: *Okay, so you just have that one chapter then?*

John: Uh-huh.

Bob: *How many people are working on this?*

John: It's past a thousand.

Bob: *So, what's the overall length of the team-up, four Image books and four Valiant books?*

John: There's a prologue and an epilogue. There are four books overall. Two that Image is doing and two that Valiant is doing. They're not being numbered, they're being color-coded.

Bob: *Can they be read in any order then?*

John: Yeah.

Bob: *Interesting kind of team-up. It seems different than what any two companies have ever done before.*

John: Well, I think the real key thing is that it is a merging of the universes. I don't think every character in the universes are involved. I think everyone who is playing this game, is getting as many characters in there as possible. Youngblood's involved, WildC.A.T.S.'s are involved, Harbinger, H.A.R.D. Corps, Bloodshot...

Bob: *Sounds interesting. How did this team-up come about?*

John: To the best of my knowledge it started when Rob Liefeld sent a fax to Valiant saying "Youngblood, Bloodshot, this Blood's for you. What do you think, guys? They came up with it. They said, this is a possibility, they talked and actually developed it further, into a cross-over between the two companies. The Image readers will be exposed to the Valiant characters and so I think it's a good deal from the Valiant side of it.

Bob: *It seems like this team-up is a very natural thing in some respects, the Image people are very popular creators and the Valiant characters have also become very popular.*

John: And neither of them were from DC or Marvel, they were Image and Valiant. So therefore, it only makes natural sense. You might say that these are the two hottest independent companies, so it would make sense that they would match up together.

Bob: *It's slated to appear when?*

John: Mid-June, early July, I believe.

Bob: *There's a lot of competition out there this summer, with Dark Horse's Comics Greatest World, Malibu's Ultraverse, and all the rest of the summer specials.*

John: Yeah, and I'm part of the Dark Horse thing too.

Bob: *Oh yeah? What are you doing for Dark Horse?*

John: After the 16-week [preview of Comic's Greatest World] is done, then I'm doing the first of the regular books out of the

gate, Vortex

Bob: *Wow.*

John: I'm just finishing up the first script and turning it in, as a matter of fact.

Bob: *Do you think this team-up with Valiant gives Image more credibility on a professional level? Because it seems that the Image crew have been the butt of industry-wide jokes.*

John: Well, you can pick on them all you want, but when it comes to dollars, you can cry all the way to the bank. I think a lot of people who are displeased with them don't understand that Image is not being slated for them. Image knows who their fans are and they're writing for their fans.

Bob: *I think part of the reason they caught so much flack is because, as creators they haven't been around as long as say Neil Adams or Jack Kirby.*

John: Maybe not, but I'll tell you one thing, Image, has forever changed the basic approach of comics. There's nothing else [like it] in existence, it has established that it's not necessarily the characters who sell the books. It is the creators. For years, all freelancers have been told, "Well yeah, you're hot, but it's the characters who sell this." And they're going, "Well screw that, we think it's us," And they went out and they proved it. They proved that they can go toe-to-toe, one-on-one, and they can sell with the best of any of them

Bob: *Yeah, it's certainly adding to their credibility; they're no longer just this odd little phenomenon. They've proven themselves.*

John: They and Valiant have revitalized the entire independent market. I came up through the independents, right, but the thing was starting to fall back in on itself. Where was the next stage of growth? Well, they've shown where it is. It's like, "Hi, not only do we create the comics, we own the comics, we own the company, we are the company." I mean, their whole concept of the split of the money. It forever alters deals. They made the big two, including Marvel, almost penny-anty in terms of contracts and stuff. It use to be--and I'm not downgrading anybody, it's a common concept, I'm not saying I subscribe to this---but you work at DC, until you were good enough to work at Marvel. A lot of people would say DC is Marvel's farm team. So I guess you would say now that Marvel is Image's farm team.

Bob: *It almost seems so by the way that they've been swiping artists from the Marvel.*

John: Just the ones that they want. Any one of them that they want, they can get.

Bob: *Look at the powerful names now at Image, in addition to the hot young kids who have come up, they've attracted Jerry Ordway, Mike Grell..*

John: And let's talk about the writers too.

Bob: *Alan Moore, Dave Sim...*

John: Granted, not every Image is slated for me, but boy did I have a good time with 1963. I'm looking forward to some of the other things that they do along that line. They'll do things, they'll find creators who will have the best ideas. Like "Hi, bring your best ideas to us, we'll make you lots of money. You will get the rewards for it.

Bob: *You talked about the way they've altered the way the big two look at contracts. Well, you still work for the big two, has it affected your contracts?*

John: No.

Bob: *Is it because your contracts were pre-existing?*

John: No, it's because both companies are finding it very difficult, both companies have to answer to their higher-ups, and both of 'em are going to find it very difficult to make the changes. They're going to have to justify and convince their bosses that the climate has changed. I'm not sure whether they think that they need to change it, but I can tell you right now, if I made more money, substantially more money else-

where, then it makes it difficult to take work on for DC or Marvel. I am doing something for both of them. I like what I'm doing, but at some point I have to re-evaluate and say, if I'm making this much money from this over here, and that much less, I mean substantially less over there.

Bob: *How about your Valiant work. Is that a substantially better contract than what you have with DC?*

John: Absolutely.

Bob: *And again, you think it's because of the Image guys?*

John: Not entirely. Steve Massarsky comes from a slightly different area. He comes from the world of records and simply said, "Well why don't we structure the deals a little bit differently, the way we do over in records? If there is somebody out there with a proven track record and something that we want, we'll strike a better deal for them. We'll show them how they can make a lot more money." So they offered me a better deal. I didn't see how I could lose money on it, and I said, there is a possibility that I could make more money, and I'm always willing to gamble in terms of...I believe in my work.

Bob: *Well you certainly have an impressive track record, starting way back when you were at First. All the stuff you've done up through the ranks.*

John: Yes, I'm certainly willing to gamble, and say well, I can live with the quality I do and see what happens. It paid off, and I'm having a great time doing what I'm doing. I'm really enjoying it. As much as I enjoy working elsewhere, the real question has got to be, if financially I make that much better a deal, all I ask is that the other guys get competitive, get in the ball park.

Bob: *You may love doing the Spectre, he may be your all time favorite character, but if you could make twice as much money elsewhere..*

John: And do as high a quality of work...

Bob: *Oh certainly.*

John: I don't take any job just for the money, because I certainly believe that the day I take a job just for the money, is the day that everything I worked with goes away. If I have the chance to do something that would be fun, exciting and keeping with the quality level that I believe my readership expects, if they pick up something from me, than I'd be stupid not to do that. You have a chance sometimes to make money not only for yourself, but for your family. Excepting stuff for the future.

Bob: *Absolutely, creators are in the business to make money, just like companies are in the business to make money. But then, when somebody makes a lot of money somebody says "Oh, they're making money." But wait a minute. Isn't that what everybody is doing?*

John: There are those people, I think, who read The Comics Journal, who believe that if they're suffering for their art, if they're dirt poor, very idiosyncratic, if they're at all commercial they can't be any good.

Bob: *I hate that attitude. I mean, why not make money?*

John: Somebody is definitely making money, why shouldn't I? I don't do something just for the money, but on the other hand, if it's there, then I should get my piece off it.

Bob: *So how many books are you writing now?*

John: I'm doing Hawkman, Spectre, Rai and The Future Force, Magnus, Vortex, for Dark Horse. I'm finishing Gotham Knights II for DC. And, I've got a project with Marvel that hasn't been announced yet, so I can't say, but it would be like three issues.

Bob: *Would it be for the regular line or for Epic?*

John: It would be a licensed property.

Bob: *Is there anything that you're not doing that you would love to do?*

John: Grimjack.

Bob: *Is that something that you own?*

John: Not right now, First Comics owns it, and so we'll see what happens with that in the future. I'm interested in trying to acquire it. There were deals, at one point, that we talked about that didn't come through. I may be in the position where I can do something about acquiring it myself. We'll see what happens.

Bob: *You think now that since CIE (Classics International Entertainment the company that acquired First Comics), will soon be publishing, that they would handle it?*

John: I don't know if that's a comic they're interested in. They certainly have already sold off Nexus and Badger. So I think they would be open to a deal that would be decent.

Bob: *Since you're now working for Dark Horse, and they are already publishing Nexus and have just announced Badger. Grimjack moving over seems kind of a natural thing to happen.*

John: But what I'd rather do is acquire the rights myself then I'd decide where it goes.

Bob: *Okay, you think if you got it, would you take it to Image?*

John: I don't know. There are several places that expressed an interest in it, including Valiant.

Bob: *Would you try to fit it into the Valiant universe then?*

John: Not necessarily.

Bob: *Oh. You would think they would try to stay with stuff that stays in their own universe.*

John: I think they have a very definite vision of what they're doing. And I don't think they want to get too many titles in their primary universe. They have expansion plans, these guys are real smart, I don't think that can be over-emphasized. The guys up there are real smart. They know what they're doing, for instance, they aren't trying to flood the market, they bring out books on a regular basis, but

the concept always is bring them out slowly so that if you're reading Valiant books, you don't have to lay one down to pick up another one. Just take Marvel for example. They bring out so many titles that you're not going to pick up all of them, so if all you're reading is Marvel titles, you're going to drop one Marvel title to pick up another Marvel title

Bob: *Yeah, it's just too much, and the summer is definitely buried under the weight of new projects that are coming out.*

John: That's why Valiant only has a new book every couple of months, they want to do it gradually, so they don't force people to the point where they'll say, well, okay, I'll stop buying Turok, or I'll stop buying Magnus to pick up Dr. Mirage when it comes out.

Bob: *Do you think we're heading for an implosion? We're gonna peak out and the market is just gonna crash and burn?*

John: Yes, oh yeah. This can't continue as it is. I don't think there is anyone in the industry who thinks it can.

Bob: *It's a Hell of a ride in the meantime.*

John: Yeah.

Bob: *I think with all this competition, some of the weak links will shake out, but, still, with all this work out there, with so many people vying for the fan's dollar, I would say that the quality has to improve in some level. Both for the creators and for the fans themselves.*

John: What do you mean? The quality of the books?

Bob: *The quality of the books, the quality of the contracts offered, the whole industry has got to benefit from this in some level.*

John: What from all the product?

Bob: *From all the product, don't you think?*

John: No, no, no, you're out of your mind. With all the product coming out that means, that first of all, you've got to go out and find more pencilers, more writers, to do the product. To start off with, we're talking about a talent pool that's got a whole lot of extra people that are incompetent at it. I mean, what's the crap level right now? It's pretty high. Well, how is bringing it out more, going to make it any less crap? Everyone's production facilities are stressed out as it is. Take a look at the production value of some of the books. If they're bringing out monstrous numbers of books, then you've got to take a look and say, okay production can only handle so many more, unless they are radically expanding their production staffs and I haven't seen DC or Marvel doing that, well then the quality level is going to go down.

Bob: *Well, okay, but I was actually speaking in the level of if a company, such as Image will raise the stakes somewhat, and the Valiant/Image crossover has raised the stakes, there are books that wouldn't have come out with just the two-company market system. That would change the way people look at comics, and maybe if we could expand the marketplace itself...*

John: Yeah, but take a look at the way everything is being planned. Where, for instance, is the western comic? We do have new black characters but that's because Milestone is bringing them out. In terms of all the new characters that are coming out this summer, from both Marvel and DC, have for instance, similar products, where they're going to bring out a whole bunch of new characters, okay. So now you tell me, how many blacks, how many minorities and how many women characters, strong, new characters, are going to come out of those? Or is it just more of the same?

Bob: *Yeah, you're right. It's probably more of the same, there will be a few I'm sure, but a small percentage of them.*

John: Very small, as far as I can tell. I don't think that we're seeing that much diversity and I think that there are very few of the new books that are going to show any kind of diversity. I'd be more impressed if I saw more diversity in it.

Bob: *What attracts you to picking up a new book or considering writing a different character?*

John: Okay that's two different things. You're talking about me as a writer, versus me as a consumer: as a consumer, I basically get excited by the people doing it. Certain writers I always tryout. Alan Moore. Peter David. I like their work and see what they're doing. There are certain artists that I always try. There are certain writer/artists that I'll try. I'm interested enough in Howard Chaykin to pick up his new Midnight Men from Epic. I know both Chuck Dickson and Flint Henry both as people and individually as creators, and I'm interested in picking up the new Lawdog as well. I sampled some of the Marvel 2099 characters. I may sample something, if it doesn't attract me real quick in terms of some solid character or something interesting going on, I'm not going to stick. Doom 2099 is the one I actually enjoyed the most.

Bob: *I don't like Doom as a villain, I like him more as the hero he seems to be in 2099.*

John: Well, again, there's he's sort of an anti-hero, hero in the world they've created. They're playing with the values of Dr. Doom, who might turn out to be a hero

Bob: *Essentially he's still a villain, but he's fighting more heinous villains, so that makes him kind of a hero. If you're out to get somebody who's nasty, then you want somebody who is nastier. It makes for some interesting stories*

Well, then, as a writer, what attracts you to a project?

John: Different things will attract me to different projects. For instance, I hadn't really planned to go on with Hawkman

after the Hawkworld series, but this chance to work Jan Duursema, who I was very interested in working with, so sometimes it's who I'm working with. I picked up The Spectre because Tom Mandrake became available and we both had very strong feelings about the Spectre, so we grabbed it and started developing that. Valiant called me and said "Would you be interested in doing Magnus?" At that point I found I was really just working for DC, even though I wasn't exclusive, everyone perceived me as being exclusive. I thought it was time to break out of that. So it was a business decision, I decided I had to stand out of the fact that I am not exclusive with somebody. Because you really don't have any negotiating leverage that way. Then, in doing something with Magnus, I was able to do some really good ideas, I did some reading and research and stuff. They said this the way we like to do it, we like it to be this way, and I said okay, this is the way I'd do it. I'd do, this, this and this. What do you think? With Dark Horse, they called me and asked me to do this character in this book. Which was interesting because it wasn't a character that I had developed, or a world that I had developed. But it was a chance, again, to play in somebody else's turf. It was a different experience, it was a different experiment. I think, in another couple of years, after I've finish most of what I'm currently working on, I'll be looking more and more into working with certain creators, and to create characters that I build from the bottom up. I'm already developing one or two things with some people. So I could see that would be the direction I'll go in, in the future. I think ultimately I will enjoy that more. It really depends to be in terms of..

Bob: *Just different things...*

John: Yeah, sometimes I'm attracted to the character that I'm working on, its mythic scope, I really do believe that the comic book characters have to have depth into the elements of myth. They are not myth themselves, but they are by depth into the elements of myth.

Bob: *Other than Grimjack, any other characters, other company-owned characters on which you would really be interested in working*

John: Well, let's see, I've always enjoyed working on *Batman* and the *Challengers of the Unknown* over at DC. Over at Marvel, I've always loved The *Fantastic Four*, and *Dr. Strange*. Will I get the chance to do any of these characters? Oh, I don't know. It would depend on the circumstances surrounding any of them. I've had the chance to do some things that have been real cool, and the stuff we accomplished with the Batman story "Suspicion of the Gun" stuff... I'm glad I had that opportunity because it had some impact.

Bob: *Yeah, that was a great story.*

John: We changed some things in terms of the local laws.

Bob: *Oh, yeah, you had told me about that! How did that work again?*

John: We actually changed the law, down in Virginia. Governor Wilder ordered some 300 copies of the book because Virginia was mentioned as a place where you could go to get a lot of guns. Which was true at the time the book was written. You could go down there, literally, and buy ammunition by the crate.

Bob: *Guns 'R' Us...*

John: Yeah, the only change they wanted to make was that you be held to buying one gun per month. So, in other words, you could belong to a "gun-of-the-month club", and still be legal, down in Virginia. What Wilder did is use the comic book to focus national attention on the situation. The spotlight, therefore, was right on Virginia. A lot of Virginians are going to be very embarrassed by that, and they were able to get enough pressure up. This was all a part of a whole anti-crime package, while we were down there we heard about the other laws that were passed around the same time. It was part of a very extensive package. A very impressive package. They are trying to use it as a model to introduce a national gun control along similar lines.

Bob: *It would be great if they could and wouldn't it be cool to be even a small part of that.*

John: Well, we have been part of that, when I was down there for the signing, I asked both the Governor's staff and some of the people in the gun-control movement whether or not we were just aside show or were we really an integral part of it. They said, "No, this book was very important in terms of helping to focus national attention and getting this bill passed."

Bob: *Wow. And parents use to just derive them as being funnybooks, huh?*

John: Yeah. They're not just "funnies" anymore. Comics can be very serious. I'm sure there are people in Virginia going around saying "Geez, even Batman says..."

Yeah, but what some people forget is that Batman is not real.

Bob: *Perhaps not, but he's a powerful icon anyway.*

John: Yes, and that underlines the subliminal forces that we're dealing with, I would imagine. People don't realize how powerful something like a simple comic book can be.

In the Valiant future history, according to* ***Rai #0**, Solar splits himself off at least once, and—according to Ostrander, probably more than once.*

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Top O' My Head

by R.G. Roadcup

Welcome to the second edition of "Top O' My Head," the column that seeks to evoke emotion through stream-of-consciousness meanderings about anything and everything.

- *TO START OFF WITH...* I attended a huge comics convention in New York City recently and have never seen such an outpouring of hero worship than that which descended upon the fine folks at Image Comics. Fans were standing in line for up to two hours to obtain a signature from their favorite Image artists, including Jae Lee, Sam Kieth, and Erik Larsen (a truly nice guy). I'm sorry, but my time is much too valuable to spend in such an endeavor. I'm all for autographs from my favorite creators (I nabbed a nice one from my favorite artist of all time, Neal Adams, who I met for the first time at the con), but would you spend two hours waiting for an autograph--from anyone? - *TAME THAT EGO...* I recently read an interview with current *X-Men* scribe Scott Lobdell, wherein the question was asked him about the work of Chris Claremont. He jokingly replied, "Who?" This was pretty flippant for a guy who owes his entire career to the man who established the mutant universe (with Dave Cockrum, John Byrne and others, of course). The lack of respect and recognition given to those who made Marvel the multi-million dollar company it is is truly reprehensible. You're a talented writer Scott, but don't forget those who laid twenty years worth of groundwork, bud. - *THERE THEY GO AGAIN...* If you've never heard of Dr. Donald Wildmon, he's president of the American Family Association, a rather facist organization dedicated to keeping you from reading, watching, seeing and hearing things they find offensive. Every few years they take it upon themselves to try and censor comics, usually to no avail (but they're probably indirectly part of the reason Marvel doesn't allow its writers to use the words "damn" and "hell" in its comics--we can't have grandmothers in Oklahoma being offended, can we?). Recently Dr. Wildmon ran newspaper ads all over the country, declaring that his organization was outraged at everything from movies to TV soap operas. Instead of pushing the "off" button on his television, he blames endless hordes of faceless, "writers, directors, producers, singers, actors, etc." for America's moral decline. You forgot Key Grips, Doctor. They're at least as guilty as the singers. His address, if you wish, like me, to tell he and his group that censorship is un-American (or, if you agree with him and wish to donate money--it is a free country) is:

American Family Association, Dept. B22 P.O. Drawer 2440/107 Parkgate Dr. Tupelo, MS 38803

- *A SHOW OF HANDS, PLEASE...* So who misses *Grimjack, Badger,* and *Jon Sable, Freelance* as much as I do? *Shaman's Tears* was good, Mike, but where's Jon? - *HE'S NOT DEAD, JIM...* Who'da thought that we would have the real Superman back before the end of the year? It's too bad, in a way. I like the four new guys. Even the kid. - *PUNISH THE GUILTY...* Has anyone else noticed the disturbing trend in comics of letting the bad guys go unpunished? It started with the Kingpin destroying Daredevil's life back when Frank Miller was doing the book. Kingpin destroyed the poor guy and got off scot-free. In the mutant books, evil mutants constantly vandalize property, kill homo-sapien and superior indescriminately, beat the tar out of X-Teams, then disappear to return when they get their own trading card. Seems like someone should go to prison at least once in a while. And what about the king of untouchable bad guys, Lex Luthor? Shouldn't he at least get split ends for all the trouble he's caused Superman over the years? I think that's why I like the Punisher so much. Not too many of his villains make it back for a repeat performance. - *MISSED GEMS...* If you're not reading these books, you're really missing out... *Legionnaires, Hellblazer, Bone, John Byrne's Next Men,* and *X-O, Manowar.*

The Magic Primer

Lesson I: Anatomy of the Card

Name of Card: Each card has a unique name which is used to identify it in gaming and collecting circles.

Illustration: High quality color art from over two dozen artists nationwide. Each artist's style broadens the set's diversity without destroying the overall unity of the series.

Card Type: Cards are grouped by color for easy identification during play.

Card Description: Provides special rules for each card, or adds descriptive elements to enhance game play.

Playing Cost: Describes the price of bringing this card into play.

Graphic Design: Great care has been taken in creating the visual effect of the cards. Each of the seven card types has a unique design, though they all share a similar three-dimensional appearance.

Power and Toughness: Only creature cards have these stats. The numbers describe the offensive and defensive strengths of the creatures.

Coming This Summer!

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A Conversation With ...Sky Comics

Part 3

Interview by Dan Souder

Dan Souder: *Since our last chat, things are really starting to gear up for your fall releases. I read you have a great creative team lined up for* ***Dead Kid****. How about a run-down?*

Joe Martin: Well, as we said, *Dead Kid* was created by Tom and Mary Bierbaum, famed writers of the *Legion of Superheroes* and *Legionnaires* for DC and we've chosen an artist by the name of Joe Corroney who lives in Ohio. He's got an excellent style that seems to lend life, so to speak, to Morty.

Bob Hickey: That's Dead Kid. His real name is Morty Coyle.

DS: *As in "mortal coil," I get it [chuckles].*

JM: Yeah, that's Tom and Mary for ya'. The rest of the creative team is rounded out by newcomer, and friend of the ole' T&M, Bill Nichols. They've been promising him work for years and now he's finally getting it!

We just recently did the Chicago Comicon and people seemed really excited about this project. We were giving away free prints and I think Tom and Mary signed almost more of them than they did *Legion* books!

DS: *Any special promotions lined up for these titles such as the DK newsletter?*

BH: Ah, the *Dead Kid* newsletter...

JM: It's actually entitled the *Falcon's Perch*. It's a high school newspaper.

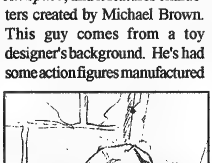
BH: Right. When people see these they'll be getting their first taste of what the series is going to be like. Initially, this is a retailer's only kind of giveaway to inspire them to order lots of books but people will also be able to get them at conventions and then they'll be polybagged with *Dead Kid* #1.

DS: *Cool. Sounds like a great book. I also heard something about a galactic team of law-enforcers from Sky Comics. Can you go into detail about this?*

JM: Not everything's official yet.

BH: But we can tell you anyway. Joe?

JM: Okay [chuckles], it's called *Space Police, Law Enforcers of All Space*, and it features characters created by Michael Brown. This guy comes from a toy designer's background. He's had some action figures manufactured



by the Olmec Corporation that have been distributed by Hasbro and he has an agreement for *Space Police* action figures, and possibly other related toys like balls and stuff.

Right now, we're doing that negotiating thing with the penciller of the series but the inker's name is Jerry Foley and I'm sure Michael would like me to mention his partner-in-crime, Kat. She's the force behind it all and Michael's just a pawn [laughs].

BH: I'm sure he'll appreciate that.

JM: I'm sure she will.

BH: But you were asking about other kinds of promo, too. I've got something special in store for major supporters of *Blood & Roses* that may grow into something even bigger.

DS: *Can you tell us what it is?*

BH: Not yet. Although the initial deal is already set. It's something neat in the way of merchandise and I've even got a manufacturer taking the project into consideration.

DS: *Sounds interesting.*

BH: Oh, it is. I love it.

JM: Of course, we do flyers and posters and newsletters and stuff. I'm also looking to do some special kind of giveaways in our books. Merchandise that is in some way related to the stories.

DS: *What kind of merchandise?*

JM: Well, we were considering in *Blood & Roses* contacting a major archaic weapons manufacturer and trying to organize a contest to give away an authentic, battle-ready shield.

BH: They travel through time and the era they go to in that particular story is the Middle Ages.

JM: Camelot, to be precise.

BH: Yes.

JM: At first, I wanted to give away an actual saber in *Seeker* but you can kind of see immediately the bad side of that.

DS: *Major lawsuit, huh?*

JM: Major. I can just hear it how a junior Seeker wanna-be cuts off Uncle Fred's big toe.

DS: *[Chuckles] That can be a problem.*

JM: Tell me about it.

DS: *Now for the "biggie" -- as an alternative publisher, how will you prove yourself to fans and*

retailers by ensuring the books will ship on time?

BH: For one, no book is solicited before its time. That is, before it is completely finished. We're going to have the stuff waiting and ready for the orders to pour in.

JM: And pour in they shall. Man, I'm absolutely confident that the readers will buy these books. The retailers would be out of their minds not to order. This is like sure money in their pockets.

DS: You sound confident.

JM: Well, the guys at Lightning Comics got a lot of orders based on hype.

BH: Like over 30,000.

JM: Yeah.

DS: Lightning Comics? That's the guys who are doing the Bloodfire comic?

JM: Right. The guy's an HIV positive hero. But the thing is they found a catch. They stuck a few pieces of art out there and lots of ego. It worked.

BH: So I'm letting Joe be our resident egomaniac.

JM: I'm like Mr. T. Buy our books! They're tough! They're bad! Just like me! If you don't buy our books, I pity the fool!

BH: Don't go overboard, now.

DS: [Laughs] I'll take my gold chains and wrap 'em around your neck, ya' fool!

JM: [Laughs] Or you could do like Arnold and say...

(From here the interview got a bit out of hand so we'll skip ahead a little...)

DS: What's in store for Sky Comics in the future? Where will you be, say, next year?

BH: Where will we be or where do we hope to be [laughs]?

DS: Where do you hope to be?

BH: In the Bahamas...or maybe St. Croix, I heard that place is nice.

JM: Yeah? I heard Barbados wasn't too bad.

BH: Really?

Seriously. In a year I'd like to see Sky successfully publishing its regular feature titles such as *Seeker* and *B&R* and *Dead Kid* and still putting out specialty publications like *Space Police*. Maybe an animation in the works and lots of cool merchandise. Our books will have at least a 50,000 circulation per title. No more than 250,000. We'll limit ourselves there.

JM: No, man, the sky's the limit, dude. The Sky is *the* limit.

BH: Yeah, I guess your right. No limit.

DS: Cool interview.

JM: Thanks. I'd like to do one more thing and thank some people who have been a great help. First, my parents, Mike and Phyllis, my excellent girlfriend, Tracy Moore, and an all-around Sky Comics supporter and personal bodyguard, Dwayne Haddix. Thanks, you guys.

BH: Thanks, mom. Stick in there, Katie. Hey, Luke!

See ya'.

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BUCKNAKED — THE POLITICALLY CORRECT MEET THE ANATOMICALLY CORRECT. ARRIVES IN THE FALL

ALL TITLES ARE STRONGLY SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

Brit Bits

News and gossip from where the beer is warm!!

by Paul Birch

Picture the scene: it's the Glasgow comic convention, and the *Red Dwarf* panel has about 10 minutes left to run as a figure carrying portfolio in one hand, and pint glass in the other wades through the audience. Said individual proceeds to clamber up onto the stage and seat himself between the other panelists, as a voice from the crowd calls out, "That must be Alan Burrows!"

Far be it from me to say our Al was the worse for drink, but many thanks from all in Great Britain to Mr. Archie Goodwin and his wife for taking the artist out on his birthday and sparing the rest of us from his company. It is suspected that a subsequent hangover caused him to miss a meeting with *Judge Dredd Magazine* editor, David Bishop. Alan Grant is said to have found Burrows' antics hilarious.

The Burrows/Ian Edginton strip Funguys will most likely appear in Atomeka's *Monster Massacre*, as should a few other bits and pieces written by Edginton; one such being Bug-Hunt which he hopes will be drawn by *Animal Man* artist Steve Pugh, the two having previously collaborated on Downtown, first seen in *Deadline*, then *Dark Horse Presents*. When I asked The Edge how he and Steve initially met, the reply captured the flavor of this month's column quite succinctly.

"I read this comic which he self-published with Phil Winslade (working with Edginton on *The Red Sea* for Epic) called *Eat in or Takeaway*, and got his number from the guys in the local comic shop. We met up for a drink and got completely out of our faces! We'd never met each other before and it cemented a firm friendship."

Lest you think these tales of inebriation are a way of life over here, like anywhere it's fine to socialize in the bar with those you know, but some have found those antics pursued whilst under the influence have led to a loss of work. The Edge is usually a sober chap anyhow, and he probably needs to be when you consider how weird a future Dark Horse project is.

"*Fat Baby Head* has been on the cards for two years now. It's been the problem of finding artists. D'Israeli's doing the main art (he's one of the most underestimated artists in the UK) while Kyle Baker is drawing a back-up strip which I'm ecstatic about. It's not scheduled yet but it's about a kind of Frank Capra/David Lynch nice middle-American town where something unpleasant is going on behind closed doors... and there's this character with a big fat baby's head! It's like Voltaire's *Candide* with this innocent abroad, but set against a

mythical – anywhere from the thirties to the fifties – double-breasted suits and hats atmosphere. It's an atypical period piece but with some very surreal aspects to it."

Lawrence Hutchings, who did some work for *Over the Edge* looks set to draw the Scottish Judge, Hal Cab in b&w for the *Megazine*. Meanwhile former artist on the strip, John Ridgway, should be working on *Prince Valiant* for Marvel, with Charles Vess scripting, while I'm told there's talk of a *Stalker* revival at DC by Ridgway and the original series' writer, Paul Levitz. It's the kind of material John excels at, so readers are in for a treat.

August is the launch date for Marvel UK's genetically orientated titles, appearing under the heading: Gene Pool.

Codename: Genetix will take a second outing, written once more by Graham Marks and Andy Lanning, and pencilled by Phil Gascoigne. This time 'round the young heroes learn of a similarly created team still under Mys-Tech's control and a project called 'Cradle,' which spells further trouble for them.

Lanning partners Dan Abnett for *Gun Runner*. The six-issues pencilled by Terry Clark finds Gun Runner waking from a long sleep only to discover his enemies The Cynodd are also still alive and rebuilding their strength through techno-mystical means. #1 guest-stars Blaze and Ghost Rider.

Writing solo on the ongoing *Dark Guard*, Abnett tells the story of the Time Guardian gathering Earth's best fighters to thwart Mys-Tech. Newcomer Carlos Pacheco pencils and a Marvel UK character will die in #1.

Former editor turned freelance writer, John Freeman partners with artist Dave Taylor in *Gene Dogs*. Over four issues readers discover how a raw and untrained group, already boosted in their human potential are then genetically enhanced by various animal genes to battle super-villain teams who appear to have endless resources available to them.

Comic World and *Comic International* are professional magazines that have been established over here for some time now, but there's currently a renewed interest in fandom, which is viewed as being a reaction against speculators and publishers' hype.

Zum!, the small press comics reviews magazine's been out for over a year to a good critical response, and three new fanzines have debuted: *Comic Speculator* – unseen but said to feature news and collecting tips, *Battleground* – a magazine of critical response edited by Andy Brewer, which welcomes readers' input, and *Mutant Media* by Phil Hall, an X-Men fanzine which sounds like it'll do well, and interestingly, this publication is said to take Marvel's marketing of the X-Men to task.

Zum! is co-edited by Luke Walsh and Mike Kidson. I have been fortunate enough to have been asked by Mike to give my views on a book he's currently writing titled *The Shaping of British Comics*, a privilege because anyone who's read Mike's work before knows that if anyone is able to dissect and analyze how the medium has been shaped by our particular culture, he's the one. The author stresses that is not intended as being the final answer on the subject, but something that he hopes will cause critical debate between Britain's comic community. That it will!

And finally, if any readers out there are also stamp collectors, British first class stamps currently feature characters from comic books and children's books and are well worth keeping an eye out for.

Trading Card News

Benchwarmer News

Benchwarmer Cards make their much-anticipated return in August with the release of *Benchwarmer Series II Cards.* Of special note, look for *Sport* Magazine Swimsuit Cards! In fact, *Sport* is releasing its June issue with a special 16-page Benchwarmers insert and Diamond is soliciting it to help drive card sales. For cards of beautiful clothed models, Benchwarmer leads the (foil) pack!

Comic Images News

ANIA Collector Cards

What happens when you cross a hot collectibles company like Comic Images with a just-as-hot, up-and-coming group of black comicbook pulishers like ANIA? The hottest trading card series of the year! Coming in August, *ANIA Collector Cards by Comic Images* will feature recent media darlings like Heru, Son of Ausar, Turner, Ebony Warrior, and Purge. As a bonus, three classisc Chromium Cards and three super Spectra-Scope Cards are randomly packed within the series. These characters and their books have taken the comic world by storm -- don't miss out!

Cap Slappers

The hottest trend in the industry, milk bottle covers, just jumped 100 degrees with Comic Images' new *Boris* and *Olivia Cap Slappers*! Each rich card is printed on quality stock in vibrant full color with two caps diecut, so they can be left in and kept like a trading card or popped out and used as a cap. They're offering 44 different images per series, plus, 4 special prism caps are randomly inserted in each series.

SkyBox News

Bloodlines Cards

SkyBox International and DC Comics introduce an exclusive new trading card set based on the dramatic storyline and new characters featured in the 1993 DC Comics Annuals.

This 81-card set features a regular card for each of the characters claiming to be Superman: Superboy, The Man of Tomorrow, The Last Son of Krypton, and The Man of Steel, along with four special foil-embossed bonus cards randomly inserted (one for each of the Superman characters). Also included is a very limited edition "Superman Exchange" card. Consumers who find this special card will be able to send it in for a card of the one true Superman left when the dust settles at the end of "The Reign of the Supermen." All new, original artwork has been created exclusively for this card line, and a powerful card design with hard-hitting graphics as card borders in used.

This set also features three exciting categories of cards, including 18 New Blood Kids -- cards featuring all-new, super-powered characters in the DC Universe. New Blood Kids' cards have vertically oriented fronts and comprehensive bios and power ratings on the backs. There are 54 Action Cards -- featuring new characters interacting with existing DC Universe heroes and villains, including Lobo, Eclipso, Deathstroke, and more. The backs of these horizontally designed cards form a giant puzzle featuring the parasites. Moreover, 7 Parasite Cards are included -- a card for each of the deadly parasites which have invaded the DC Universe, including Slodd, Angon, Lissik, Pritor, Gemir, Glonth, and Venev. Card fronts depict the seven in their parasite form, while backs show them as humanoids.

Scott's *Blazing* Top Ten

Top Ten Worst Super Powers

10.) X-Ray Hearing

9.) Control Moss

8.) Absorb Pain

7.) Odoriferous Emanation

6.) Super Bleeding

5.) Armor-piercing Hair

4.) Hypnotize the Dead

3.) Detect Oxygen

2.) Create Dew

1.) Elastic Lips

Marvel Series IV

SkyBox International announced today that it has completed production and begun shipments of *Marvel Universe: Series IV*, the fourth series of the most popular trading card franchise in history.

Marvel Universe: Series IV trading cards sold out at the wholesale level prior to shipment, marking the fifth consecutive comic card sell-out for SkyBox prior to release at retail – a trend begun in 1992 with *Marvel Masterpieces* trading cards. *Marvel IV* trading cards are being shipped to retail in cases of 20 36-pack boxes each. The ten-card packs carry a suggested retail price of $0.99 each.

Marvel IV trading cards feature 180 cards of all new, all original art by the hottest artists at Marvel Comics in a new graphic format, which captures Super Heroes, Super-Villains, and Rookies in unique, interconnected nine-card groupings. This includes New York City, featuring Spider-Man, Venom, and Daredevil, Outer Space, featuring Silver Surfer and Galactus, and the X-Mansion, featuring Storm, Magneto, and Wolverine. A 35-card *Famous Battles* subset and three all new nine-card subsets – *Marvel UK*, *Alien Races*, and *Unsolved Mysteries* - complete the series.

Ten limited edition bonus cards, twice as many as in previous *Marvel Universe* series, will be randomly inserted in ten-card packs of *Marvel IV*, including nine bonus Marvel 2099 cards, which feature original artwork printed both under and over a foil embossed background, and one Super 3-D Card of Spider-Man vs. Venom as they have never battled before.

First offered in 1990, *SkyBox Marvel Universe* trading cards initiated the current surge in comic card collecting. The *Marvel IV* series represents the seventh project in the SkyBox-Marvel Comics partnership, which has also produced highly successful series of *X-Men* and *Marvel Masterpieces* cards.

Upper Deck News

Upper Deck is expanding its Baseball card line, by introducing *Baseball Fun Packs*, cards designed for kids.

Also introduced next month will be *Adventures in Toonworld*, featuring Looney Tunes characters matched up with Michael Jordan, Joe Montana, Wayne Gretzky, and Reggie Jackson. It is the refined version of Comic Ball, and looks to be very innovative! The series also combines the talents of two of the world's most popular artists: master animator Chuck Jones and *Mad* caricaturist supreme Mort Drucker!

Behind every great man WOMAN ...there's a woman ALIEN.
Gorby 93
Beau Smith
Brad Gorby
PARTS UNKNOWN
THE NEXT INVASION
ECLIPSE
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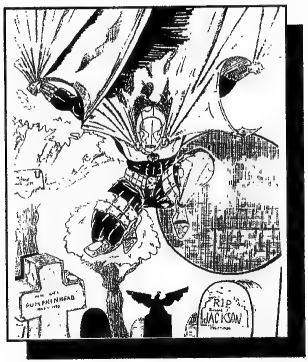
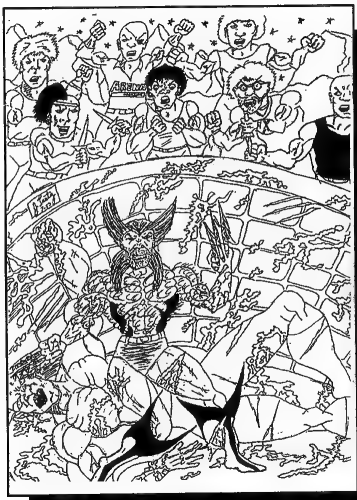


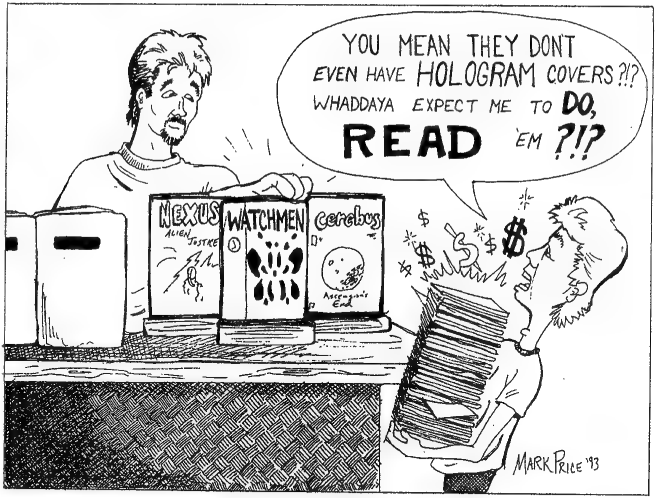
Richard Jackson, Age 25
Toledo, OH

James Pautz, Age 22
Central Islip, NY



Raff Ienco, Age 24
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

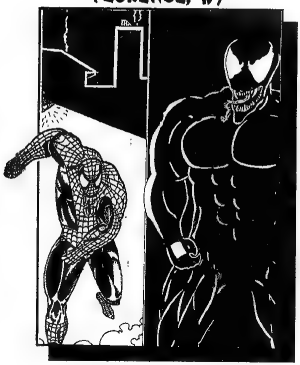
ARENA MAGAZINE FAN ART



MARK PRICE, AGE 21
FAIRFIELD, OH

RAFF IENCO, AGE 24
HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

CHRIS RILEY, AGE 18
FLORENCE, KY



PREVIEW

SEEKER: VENGEANCE

by Joe Martin, Willie Peppers and Allen Freeman
Published by Sky Comics

JOE MARTIN'S
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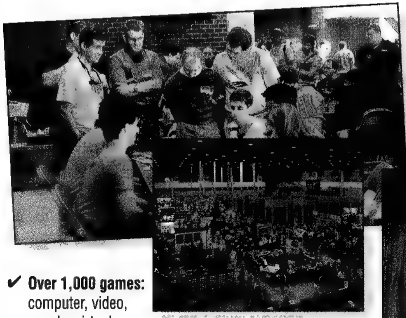

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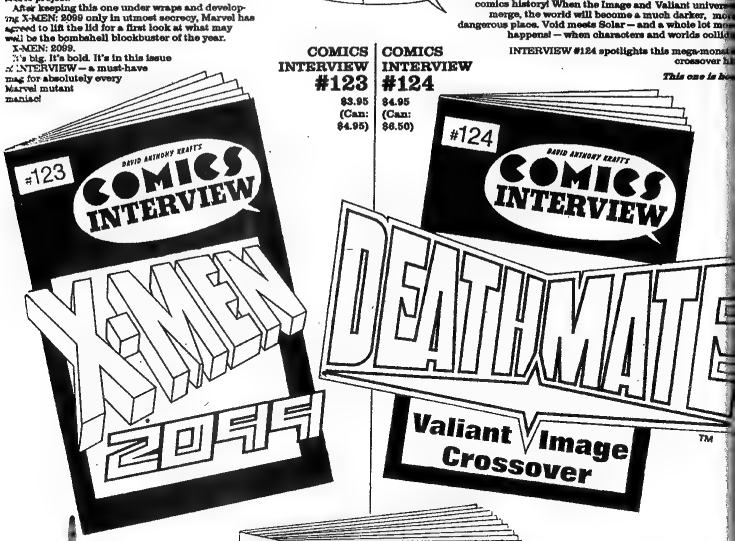

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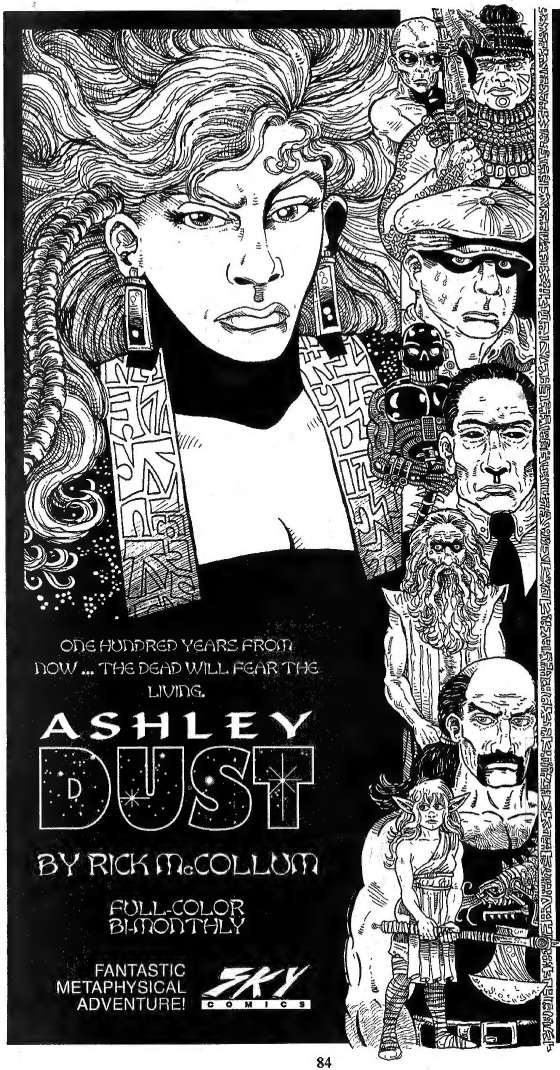
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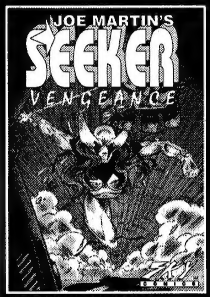

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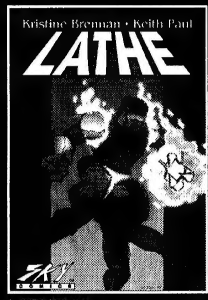

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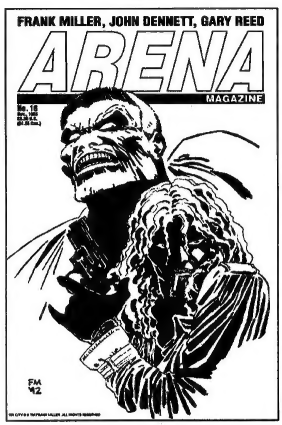

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